000 Ministers and officials in the court of the emperor of the Mossi. We shall provide a list of the persons making up the emperor's court in a later chapter.

## Functions of the Ministers

645 The four ministers, Ouidi Naba, Larallé Naba, Gounga Naba, and Baloum Naba, were charged with the nomination of the kombemba (plural of kombéré, vassal chief), subject to the emperor's approval. At the present time they retain the same prerogatives subject to ratification by the administrative authorities. These ministers further assisted the emperor in deciding important matters whenever he called upon them, and they transmitted the orders of the Mogho Naba to [48] his vassals. Today the Mogho 643 Naba is hardly concerned with the regulation of affairs, since these 648 are dealt with by his ministers or by the French authorities. However, the leading court dignitaries always submit to him matters of any importance, they keep him informed about all matters of general interest, and, finally, they report to him any interviews which they may have had with the administrator of the circle, who represents the government of the colony [Ed., the circle (Fr., cercle) is the largest French administrative unit below the colony (Fr., colonie)].

## Organization of Territorial Control

634 Each of the emperor's ministers had authority -- we shall 845 presently see under what conditions -- over a group of cantons [Ed., the canton (Fr., canton) is a traditional Mossi administrative unit, containing a number of villages, and several cantons together form a province; the native districts were incorporated into the French administrative system to some extent]. A kombéré naba was head of each canton. Originally and up to the time of Naba Sanum's reign, the Baloum Naba commanded the dimbissi (canton chiefs who were descendants of the recent Mogho Nabas), while the other cantons, except the most thickly populated and hence the richest, such as Zittenga, Manga, etc., were distributed

submission was based solely on the fact that although the emperor named new canton chiefs, he was too remote to know anything about the children of deceased naba, so, in order to make sure during his own lifetime that his eldest son would succeed him, the kombéré affected some respect toward the emperor's ministers and made gifts to the principal dignitaries at Ouagadougou.

Present situation. It is my belief that the present political and administrative reorganization, which dates back about eighteen years (1912), has taken no account whatsoever of the existing hierarchy of ministers in the distribution of territorial control. Thus, it has come about that a given minister has to pass through numerous villages which are under the authority of another minister in order to reach his own administrative area. In addition, if one examines the situation closely, it seems that the sole aim of the administration ["administration" always refers to French administration] at that time was to reward certain young and capable ministers at the expense of those who were too old.

In point of fact, however, one must go back to 1908 to find the causes of such a state of disorganization. At that time the late Larrhallé Naba, Pawitraogo, a province chief, was sent off on a mission to Koudougou, and his vacated office had to be filled. Later on the emperor dismissed the Kamsogho Naba [51] and replaced him with an "incompetent," so the local administration decided to entrust the province to a more qualified minister.

It would be highly desirable if a new reorganization were put into effect which would 1) progressively eliminate certain insignificant cantons by combining them into larger units; 2) gather the so-called independent villages into cantons; and 3) grant to province chiefs identical material rewards. This last can only be achieved by an equitable allotment of the cantons. The French administration has granted equal salaries to all province chiefs and, as a consequence, has established an equality which did not formerly exist. Three of these officials are now educated men; they enjoy equal consideration, have the same needs,and alike perform valuable services. They should all be accorded equal advantages if jealousy and discontent are to be avoided.

Finally, to return to the kombemba, it should be stated that the vassals of the Mogho Naba at Koudougou and Kaya enjoy a

567 The only slaves who have remained faithful to their masters or, more exactly, who have preferred to remain in Mossi territory after their emancipation, are nearly all Gourounsi.

## The Gourounsi Captives

567 727 648 [439] Sonrhaï [Songhai] forces led by Alpha Haïnon, Gazeré, and Babato used to raid Gourounsi country. They reduced a large number of Gourounsi to slavery, immediately making soldiers of the more enterprising among them to fight against their own people and selling or exchanging the rest for horses. Mossi country has always had a large supply of horses, so the Mossi used to go to Léo to trade their horses for slaves or simply to trade their slaves to the Sonrhaï for cowries.

567 648 The Sonrhaï chiefs maintained good relations with the emperor of the Mossi, Naba Sanum. That is why they spared the Gourounsi village chiefs who had taken refuge with the Mogho Naba.

Boukary-koutou, the future Naba Wobgo, enjoyed the [87] regard and friendship of the Sonrhaï since he aided them in their wars against the Gourounsi in exchange for an ample share of the booty and slaves. We have shown that the large number of Gourounsi whom he brought with him to Ouagadougou contributed mightily to his being named emperor of the Mossi.

567 651 During the reigns of Naba Koutou, Sanum, and Wobgo, there were special slave markets attached to the regular markets at Ouagadougou and other large centers. A fee of 1,000 cowries was collected for the benefit of the naba for each captive sold, regardless of sex.

567 302 787 When owners desired to sell a slave, they first shaved his head, and it was only after the hair had begun to grow again that he was taken to market. The cutting of the hair derives from a superstition among the Mossi.

Depending on where the hair starts to grow, whether well back on the head, at the forehead, or near the ears, the interpretation varies as to how the slave is to be regarded: as a dangerous being; as a lucky or unlucky influence on the family owning him.

We shall not now go into details since such beliefs will be discussed in a special section.

576 643 Thus, although the Mogho Naba would not in the least object to shaking hands with a Bambara or a Djerma, he would be astonished if a native Moaga -- even an official -- should offer his hand.

543 576 As soon as the children of a naba have reached the age of discretion, they may no longer play with their "papa," even less shake hands with him. They must henceforth follow the general rule which requires the Mossi salute, kantissé.

576 602 [111] Nowadays naba (kombemba) and nayiridamba (ministers of the emperor) understand the uselessness of such signs of distrust. Therefore, even though they continue to be less familiar with their relatives (brothers, uncles, and sons -- whom they regard as rivals), they willingly offer their hands to Mossi of any standing and to foreigners.

644 Reception by the naba. 1) Up to the present time and despite some thirty-five years of French occupation, the way one is received at the court of the emperor, which, of course, befalls his servitors, has altered very little. Natives who are now officials in the administration and in business enterprises are still treated on the same footing as their less highly placed compatriots. Not only are they required to perform the kantissé (Mossi salute) as described by Father Mangin, but also afterwards they must sit on the ground, a position that is difficult in European clothes. Foreigners (Bambara, [648] Djerma, even Gourounsi) are offered seats because the soroné do not regard them as fellow countrymen.

645 576 352 177 2) By the ministers. At the present time all the emperor's ministers have comfortable houses and splendid drawing rooms furnished with Morris chairs and folding chairs. These seats are offered [112] to visitors of any standing, while benches two or three meters long are reserved for persons of less consequence (house boys, cooks, circle guards, notables, etc.).

631 576 352 3) By the kombemba. Benches are always reserved for visitors of note or, if there are none, mats are provided. Some of these chiefs even own a few commonplace chairs and perhaps one or two folding chairs.

/1/ INTRODUCTION

648 On September 1, 1896, Lt. Voulet, who had been sent by Col. de Trentinian to occupy the Mossi and Gourounsi /Grunshi/ countries, entered Ouagadougou, the Mossi capital. The reigning emperor, Naba Wobro, took to flight, and his army was routed. This was a critical hour for our /French/ Sudan. The negotiations opened at the beginning of that year between France and England on the one hand, and Germany and France on the other hand, had just been broken off. In his fine book, L'expansion française et la formation territoriale /French Expansion and Territorial Settlement/, which we are merely outlining, Terrier describes the situation as follows: "The Germans were determined to extend Togoland to the Niger by cutting off our /French/ Dahomey from the Sudan, and the British denied us access to the lower Niger and the rule of Borgu country. Had these demands been met, Dahomey would have become a mere coastal enclave." (1)

1. The achievements of the Third Republic in West Africa, p. 301.

The Germans had already occupied the very important market town of Sansané-Mango and were pressing east toward the Niger, while Fergusson, a mulatto in the service of England, advanced along the Gold Coast toward the north. At the same time, the Royal Nigerian Company seized Bussa, Say, and the surrounding territories, which were then disputed and which we had not attempted to conquer out of respect for the negotiations then underway. When this news reached France through the brilliant offices of Lt. Comm. Hourst, Col. de Trentinian decided in agreement with Mr. Ballot, Governor of Dahomey, to take possession of those territories which would make it possible to link the Sudan to Dahomey, the Niger Colony, and the Ivory Coast.

Capt. Destenave, Resident in Bandiagara, our extreme frontier post in the region, was ordered to move forward and to occupy Ouahigouya in Mossi country, but he ran into the resistance of the naba of Yako and was denied access to Ouagadougou. In May, 1896, Col. de Trentinian entrusted Lt. Voulet with the mission of reaching Mossi country before the British, who were moving forward from the south with the aid of Samory and especially of his son, Sanrankégny

648 Mory, who had occupied Gourounsi country. Lt. Voulet was then to link the Mossi territory to Dahomey by way of Gourma country. His column of some fifty riflemen left Bandiagara on July 30, proceeded to Ouahigouya, subjugated the naba of Yako, and entered Ouagadougou on September 1. Naba Wobro, who had refused to enter into negotiations with Voulet, was deposed on January 20, 1897. Kouka Kountou, a member of the family of the Moro Naba, was enthroned in his place and took the name of Naba Sigri. He signed with Voulet a protectorate treaty which granted France all territories within the jurisdiction of the Moro Naba.

Now that the Mossi were conquered, the British to the south and the Germans to the east had to be checked. Voulet heard that Capt. Donald Stewart, British Resident in Kumasi, was advancing on Tenkodogo. He proceeded there in person, overtook Stewart on February 17, and obtained an agreement that the latter should withdraw 120 kilometers farther south, /2/ outside the Mossi and Manpoursi /Mamprusi/ territories, in view of the treaties the French officer had concluded with the chiefs of those countries. Voulet abandoned Tenkodogo, leaving to the respective governments the task of deciding to whom it should belong.

While these negotiations were underway, Voulet heard that an armed body of men was advancing on Mossi country from the east. He left Tenkodogo and wrote the unknown head of the column that he was to withdraw since all those lands belonged to France in accordance with the treaties signed with the native chiefs. He then advanced with his troops on Fada N'Gourma. Along the way he seized Koupela, whose panic-stricken population scattered, and on February 27 he arrived in Tigba, where he found Capt. Vermeesch who had been dispatched from Dahomey by Capt. Baud. Hence, the British were held in the south, the Germans in Togoland, and the /French/ Sudan was joined to Dahomey.

The land thus conquered was not unknown in France; several outstanding expeditions had already acquainted us with it. Binger especially, in his work called Du Niger au golfe de Guinée /From the Niger to the Gulf of Guinea/, had drawn attention to its peoples and presented, in the person of Boukary Koutou, a Mossi chief who was intelligent, open, and merry, and at the same time very authoritarian and strictly obeyed by his people. It is to be wondered why this same Boukary Koutou, who was Moro Naba under the name of Naba Wobro, provided such a poor reception for Dr. Crozat and Monteil and refused

●648 to open talks with Voulet. This poor political judgment cost him his crown. Binger had been preceded in Ouagadougou by Dr. Krause, who in 1885 was the first European allowed to enter the capital; Von François, coming from German Togoland in 1887, was stopped at the first Mossi village. As already mentioned, Binger, not without difficulty, managed to reach Ouagadougou in 1888. He stayed there for some time, longer than he had wished, and it was by virtue of his admirable energy that he was able to resume his journey toward the south. In 1890 Dr. Crozat was received for the first time by the Moro Naba, but he had to leave Ouagadougou speedily. The following year Monteil did not even manage to reach the capital. He was stopped a few kilometers from it and forced to depart abruptly. The mulatto Fergusson, in the service of the British, reached Ouagadougou by way of Tenkodogo, Nyaogo, and Kombisgri. Von Carnap, a German, came from Sansané-Mango in 1897 and visited Tenkodogo and Koupéla.

114 Such are, in brief outline, the verified contacts of the Mossi with Europeans. Were they already known by John II of Portugal, and even by John III, in the sixteenth century? Did they come from far to the east, from Sokoto, Bornu, perhaps even from Wadai? There are so many questions that seem quite mysterious to us in the present state of our knowledge of these peoples of the bend of the Niger, who lack written traditions. Lt. Marc discusses at great length the various opinions on this subject in his book, Au pays des Mossi /In Mossi Country/, chapters 1 and 7. Delafosse presents his own opinion in his work on Upper Senegal and Niger (especially in volume 2). We shall limit this account to the traditions gathered from the natives themselves.

124 Our working method, indeed, has been to question as many natives as possible and to gather their statements on all matters which seemed of interest. We have avoided any "interpretation" of the facts. We have allowed the natives to talk, to tell their story, to describe /3/ their customs, to explain the phenomena of nature and of life as they understand them. Our role was limited to a day-to-day record of what we heard, to the inducement of explanations, to the arrangement of these notes. Of course, our questions sometimes remained unanswered. We shall leave them unanswered here. Having no plan to defend, we hope to have been sufficiently objective.

114 We shall, nevertheless, be happy if this modest work makes a small contribution to the study of regional history, so heavily stressed

/4/ BOOK I. POLITICAL LIFE

## Chapter 1. The Country and Its Inhabitants

142 Although the Mossi is not a handsome type of Black, there is nothing disagreeable about him. He is rather tall, with lively eyes, woolly hair, flat nose, occasionally rather fine features, lips which are broad without being too thick, and cheeks heavily marked with three parallel lines running from the temples to the chin and a fourth leading perpendicularly from the nose to the other three. His limbs are muscular, and his color neither ebony nor copper but an intermediate hue.

291 He acquires a truly attractive and resolute air when he dresses in festive clothes, with his broad, dark blue, Zouave-like trousers, his loose shirt made of white and blue fabric strips which falls lightly over the arms, and on the right shoulder his doré, a weapon consisting 411 of a slightly bent iron rod, flattened at one end and terminating at the other in a ring hafted perpendicularly to a short stick. His wrist [301] is often adorned with a copper bracelet, and he nearly always carries at his waist a stiff knife, enclosed in a leather sheath which ends in a tuft of leather strips with cowries attached to them. He wears a 291 cap made of two diamond-shaped pieces of colored fabric half-sewn together; the two free ends may serve to cover the ears and cheeks, but are usually worn raised in the shape of a tiara. A great fighter, he wields the knife with dexterity or strikes with the doré which can become a dangerous club.

173 The Mossi are a conquering people. They have not always lived in the territory they now occupy. But where did they come from? 648 The elders questioned all say that their people came from Gambaga 643 (British Gold Coast), and this is why the Moro Naba Wobro took refuge in Gambaga when he was dethroned by the French conquest; this is also why the naba of Gambaga is notified whenever a Moro Naba dies, and why the shoes, cap, and scepter of command of the deceased are sent to him as gifts to be laid on the ancestral tomb. Gifts are also sent to the naba of Fada N'Gourma, which the Mossi call "Bingo." When the Moro Naba dies, his bow and quiver are presented to the

173 chief of Fada along with his two best horses, saddled, his two youngest
618 wives, twelve head of cattle, one captive, and three bars of salt.
643 When the naba of Fada dies, however, nothing is sent to the Moro Naba, but his best horse is sent to the chief of Gambaga.

There has been contact, therefore, between the Gourmantché /Gurma/ of Fada, the Mossi, and the Dagomse /Dagomba/ of Gambaga. The Gourmantché claim that they come from Bornu. The first naba of Fada was a slave of the naba of Bornu. The Gourmantché formerly ruled the area as far as Dori. The Peul /Fulani/ came and chased them from the region after a long war. The Gourmantché, however, did not fight either the people of Gambaga or the Mossi. If they ever fought the latter, it was in the course of civil wars; the naba of Fada requested the Mossi to help him against his own subjects.

/5/ This is how the Mossi tell of the conquest of the territory. A
173 daughter of the chief of Gambaga, called Yennenga, had a son by the hunter Riala. This son was given the name Weddaogo. His son, Zougourana, seized Tenkodogo and settled there; in his turn Zougourana's son, Naba Oubri, seized the Ouagadougou area and became master of the whole country. The eldest son of Yennenga had seized Fada and founded the present dynasty, but had been unable to impose his language or his tattoing patterns on the inhabitants. This explains the gifts sent to Gambaga, the cradle of the race, and to the naba of Fada, the eldest son of the family. Part of the autochtonous inhabitants, driven away by the Mossi invasion, withdrew to the southeast and became the Bousansé /Busansi/ and the Gourounsi; the other part, remaining in the country, were assimilated by the Mossi and learned the tongue of their conquerors. A son of Naba Oubri, Naba Namendé, seized Bélousa and its territory.

In the meantime, the naba of Tenkodogo died, leaving only one son who succeeded him. His family requested the naba of Bélousa to give them his own son, who became Kourita, representative after death, of the deceased naba of Tenkodogo. Kourita wished to return to his father in Bélousa, but the latter sent him word not to do so, and Kourita stopped at Zaoré, a day's march from Bélousa, where his immediate successors resided. It was only later that this dynasty came to settle in Koupéla, after defeating and expelling, with the help of the naba of Bélousa, the descendants of Naba Guigma who had settled in Gobro near Soulgou. This is how the province of Koupéla originated, and this is why the naba of Koupéla must be invested by his overlord, the naba of Bélousa.

669 Having learned of this, the men from Kazem'bouanga proceeded to Sapara, but the inhabitants of the village refused to yield the child who had been entrusted to them; meanwhile, the Saman'Naba had returned to his province and gathered all the followers of the young naba. With the aid of the inhabitants of Sapara, the warriors of the Saman'-Naba cut to pieces the pretender's column, killed a great many of his men, and drove them back home. The Saman'Naba then took the child to Ouagadougou, had him invested by the Moro Naba, and returned to Koupéla. The child was Naba Ibri, father of the present naba, who was reigning in Koupéla when Lt. Voulet arrived. His defeated rival killed himself.

669 About the same time, on the death of his father Yenkouaré, ● 648 Batchandé was elected king of Gourma. Some of the villages, Gyékango among them, refused to recognize his authority. Batchandé appealed to the naba of Bélousa who rounded up his warriors and ordered them to join the men of the naba of Fada. Koupéla, a vassal province of Bélousa, took part in the expedition. Gyékango, however, was bravely defended by its chief and its inhabitants, who were favored by very propitious terrain covered with thorny scrub behind which the besieged men took cover to shoot on the Mossi. This was during the dry season. Thirst completed what the courage of the Gyékango people had begun, and many Mossi perished. The naba of Bélousa was so humiliated that he wished to die of thirst, but he was saved by the naba of Pwitenga. At this point Capt. Baud arrived in Fada from Dahomey. Batchandé requested his help against his rebellious subjects, and Capt. Baud seized Gyékango which has since been called Baudéni, "Baud's village."

A war waged in favor of Lébréboundou by the people of Koupéla against those of Tenkodogo /13/ has left vivid memories. Like the preceding, it was a civil war which broke out on the death of a chief. The naba of Tenkodogo having died, the elders elected Naba Korongo as his successor, but Lébréboundou attempted to seize power. He appealed to the people of Fada and to those of Koupéla. The naba of Tenkodogo, at bay, requested in vain the aid of the naba of Bélousa and that of the Moro Naba. Both replied that the winner would be recognized as chief. The men from Tenkodogo were driven back with losses, but this occurred just at the time when the French troops arrived. The elected naba of Tenkodogo appealed to the head of the expedition, who killed the pretender and installed the lawfully elected man in Tenkodogo.

326 iron bar on an iron stump planted in the ground or on a stone. Copper
306 and zinc are smelted in small clay crucibles, the size of which varies with the desired thickness of the bracelet. The bracelet is first made in wax and coated with well-kneaded clayey earth which acquires the same shape. The wax is then removed with boiling water, and copper is poured into the clay mold. With a crude file the jewelry-maker removes the dross which clings to the metal, polishes the bracelet, and carves designs into it. The most skillful among them make attractive twisted ornaments of iron and red and yellow copper. One Ouagadougou Christian, deft at modeling wax, makes all sorts of objects, such as napkin rings, paper weights, inkwells, figurines, etc., which are not lacking in style.

484 The Mossi have always travelled a little, and they used to go quite regularly to Timbuktu; now, thanks to the French peace, journeys have become increasingly frequent. The European settlers in Tenkodogo, Ouagadougou, Léo, and Koudougou hire the Mossi as house boys and [464] take them to Ségou, sometimes to Kayes, and even to Saint-Louis. These boys, when they return, fill their friends with wonder and arouse their desire to take such great journeys also.

484 The recruitment of Black troops has also fostered this desire to see
464 new lands. Many natives have made the trip to Bandiagara to enlist as riflemen; others went to Kati, and when they found that no further enlistments were being made there, they went on to Saint-Louis.

484 During the dry season the Mossi are more often lured away by trading ventures. In October and November many young men who have managed to secure a sheep or two or a few goats and the wealthier natives who own cattle organize caravans in the hope of selling their livestock at a profit in faraway markets. In former times the Yarsé and Haoussa had a monopoly on trade. Nowadays the Mossi compete [65]
648 with them, for they must find money to pay taxes to the Whites, the famous five-franc piece. /60/ Besides, now the roads are safe. Highway robbers are no longer to be feared, and one no longer has to pay tolls every time he enters the territory of a new chief. From this point of view, and from it alone, the French peace is valued by the natives, although they find it onerous to pay taxes, to build roads and bridges, and to pay customs duties on leaving and re-entering French territory. Is a man ever pleased when something is required of him, even for his greatest good?

491 Now only the watercourses present some difficulty when they are full. The Administration, which does all it can to facilitate trade,

174 he entered into Bambarra. The inhabitants of Yenné saw him on the opposite shore of the Niger (2) before they had been told of his march.

2. Djenné is not right on the Niger nor on the Bani, but at a certain distance between the two rivers.

His flotilla joined him that same day, and, after having unloaded his provisions, he crossed the river with one part of his army and took Yenné by assault during the night. This exploit so frightened the Bambarra king that he asked for peace. He agreed to pay the victor an annual tribute of a certain number of slaves and to give back to the Gotto inhabitants all that had been taken away from them. (3)

[721 648]

3. This passage would indicate that the Dyoula of Gottogo (or Bondoukou), having some grievances against the Bambara of the Ségou region (assaulted peddlers, unpaid debts, etc.), went to the king of the Mossi to obtain justice, and that this might have been one of the causes of the war. There doubtless existed reciprocal grievances between Bambara and Mossi or between their natural allies.

Moussee /sic/ returned to Gotto in triumph, and he was proclaimed king. He gave his name to the capital."

As one can see, the important and valuable fact that must be extracted from this thick forest is the capture of Dienné by the king of the northern Mossi, the king of Yatenga (who at that time was Kango), during his struggles with the Bambara, that is, with Ngolo who was his contemporary. Because of his informants, who obviously did not inform him with absolute precision and thus made him commit many small errors or miscalculations, Mungo-Park embellished the true fact with imaginary details. First of all, there is the name of Kango, Moossie, Moussie /sic/, which is the name of the conqueror's country and not his own name. Then, the name of Gotto is given to the Mossi country, undoubtedly because of a confusion, either in the minds of the Blacks who informed Mungo-Park or in the mind of the great

174 114

173 11. Nattia, son of the preceding. He lived at Dazouli.
174 12. Namoëro, son of the preceding.
13. Kida, brother of Nattia. He lived at Ouagadougou.
14. Kimba, brother of the preceding. He lived at the same place.
15. Kobra, son of the preceding. He lived at Uougandé.
16. Sana, son of the preceding. He lived at Ouagadougou, where all his successors resided up to the present day.
17. Guiliga, son of the preceding.
18. Oubia, brother of the preceding.
19. Mottaba, son of the preceding.
20. Ouarga, brother of the preceding.
21. Zombéré, son of the preceding.
22. Kom, son of the preceding.
23. Sagha, son of the preceding.
24. Koulougou, son of the preceding.
25. Savadoro, son of the preceding.
26. Karfo, son of Savadoro.
27. Baoro, brother of Savadoro.
28. Koutou, son of the preceding.
29. Sanom, son of Koutou.
30. Boukary /sic/ Koutou, son of Koutou.
It was Bokary Koutou who was dethroned by Lt. Voulet in 1896.
31. Kouka (Siguiri) with whom Lt. Voulet signed a treaty whereby Mossi territory was placed under the suzerainty of France
32. Kom, the present Moro Naba (1910).

•648 As may be seen, therefore, the Moro Nabas continue to exist among the Mossi. France even provides them with a pension, which first amounted to 25,000 francs a year and has since been lowered to 18,000 francs. They no longer hold any powers, however, and they do nothing whatever.

175 I have found in the Monographie of the circle some interesting data on expeditions led by the Moro Nabas into Kipirsi territory, which always resisted Mossi conquest. Naba Koundoumié, sixth successor of Oubry, /463/ first led a bloody expedition to Kayao and Tiou. Naba Dawoéma, eighth successor of Oubry, waged war to the north of Yako. Naba Ouarga, twentieth successor of Oubry, settled

161 How many inhabitants did this Mossi empire number, with its careful centralization, its hierarchy of chiefs, and its class of nobles, at the time of the French occupation (1896)?

In 1909 the census yielded 861,700 souls in the circle of Ouagadougou itself and 273,000 in the Tenkodogo residency, or a total of 1,135,000 inhabitants. From this figure, however, we must deduct the independent Boussansé (99,000 in the Tenkodogo residency) and also the people of the Kipirsi (Ouagadougou circle; in theory they are ruled by the Mossi, in fact they are independent; they may be estimated at 40,000). This leaves, for the five subject provinces and the four vassal provinces, about 996,000 inhabitants. It may thus be said that the Moro Naba of Ouagadougou ruled over a population of about a million men.

161 563 Out of this million men, there were roughly /583/ 850,000 Mossi, 40,000 Boussansé, 69,000 Yarsé, 32,000 Foulbé, 5,000 Silmi-Mossi, 1,000 Songhay (in the northern part of the Ouagadougou circle), and 1,000 Haoussa scattered here and there in the same fashion as the Yarsé and Foulbé.

161 We already know that this Ouagadougou empire did not make up the whole Mossi population. There stood alongside it two other kingdoms which must formerly have been subject to Ouagadougou but which had gained their independence long before our occupation. One of them, Yatenga, with Ouahigouya as its capital, was located to the northwest of the Ouagadougou empire. The other one, Gourma, with Fada N'Gourma as its capital, was located to the east. Those two kingdoms may have added up between them to a population of 450,000 in which the Mossi element predominated, with Habé and Samo elements in the Ouahigouya circle, and Gourmanké elements in the circle of Fada N'Gourma.

In short, about a million and a half inhabitants were divided among the Mossi kingdoms in the bend of the Niger, with one million in the most important of those kingdoms, that of Ouagadougou.

161 642 648 The population of the Mossi was, and still is, extraordinarily dense as compared with the over-all population density of West Africa. Among the Mossi, indeed, there are about 25 inhabitants per square kilometer, while in French Guinea, for example, there is an average of 6 inhabitants per square kilometer. This stems

[161] 642 648 from the fact that the Mossi empire was centralized. The internal struggles which often occur among primitive Blacks (Bobo, Gourounsi, Boussansé, Kipirsi, etc.) between villages, quarters, or even soukala, did not exist among the Mossi. Internal peace and security prevailed. In addition, the same centralized power that prevented Negro anarchy also prevented the territory from being devastated by chance conquerors, founders of empires. Thus, while the Djermabé Songhay devastated Gourounsi territory, a land of independent villages or small cantons, and cast it into a kingdom by force of arms, they did not dare attack their Mossi neighbors for fear of the Moro Naba's ten thousand horsemen. /583/ Thus, both internal and external peace were insured thanks to a centralized power. Hence, the impression made by the territory on various travelers between the time of Barth's trip (he did not see Mossi itself, but followed its northern border) and the French occupation. "Mossi territory is regarded as being untouchable," says Marc (op. cit., p. 28). "No doubt, at that time (the time of Barth's trip), as Crozat verified forty years later, one was struck on entering Mossi territory by the complete safety in which the people lived, while everywhere else war and the hunt for slaves devastated the villages. And one mentioned enviously the Mossi peasants who walked singly to their fields, hoe on shoulder, while everywhere else the head of the family had to keep his weapons at hand night and day."

Marc attributes this safety to the Mossi fear of fetishes. He thus looks far afield for an obvious explanation. The Gourounsi, too, had fetishes, and yet the Djermabé did not spare them and treated them more or less as cranes would treat frogs. The Mossi were spared because they lived in a centralized and thus powerful empire, in spite of Marc's assertion that this power was nil since it could not resist Lt. Voulet's handful of riflemen. Indeed, it was nil against power displayed in European fashion, just as Achanti /Ashanti/ power was nil against British strength, and Toucouleur power could not prevail against the forces of Col. Archinard. This Mossi power was nevertheless considerable within its own sphere, that is to say, in West Africa and against other Blacks. It sufficed to give the Mossi an advantage over the Kipirsi, Gourounsi, Boussansé, etc. It sufficed to prevent Toucouleur or Djermabé attack.

642 In short, the Mossi enjoyed the benefits of a strong and cen-
648 tralized government, established no doubt in former times at the price of large-scale massacres and exterminations. And this is what makes us ponder and what is, so to speak, the reverse side of the Black conquerors' coin. It is probable that Oubry, the founder of the Mossi empire in /584/ the twelfth century, was in his time something of a Samory or a Rabah. He probably managed to establish his empire only through the crushing, pillage, and massacre of a tremendous number of small, independent Black villages or small Lélésé, Nounouma, Boussansé, and Habé cantons. Yet in the nineteenth century, on the soil of this empire established at such a price, there were 25 inhabitants per square kilometer, while among the neighboring Gourounsi who have retained their freedom there are the 5 or 6 inhabitants per square kilometer common to West Africa as a whole. In addition, while the Gourounsi were prey to the Songhay, the Habé to the Toucouleur, and the Malinké and Bambara to Samory, our Mossi lived in safety. They had less independence and anarchistic freedom, but they had internal peace and external security. They had to obey their chiefs, but they knew no domestic struggles, no crushing by foreign pillagers. In short, the Mossi had entered upon the course of orderly government, and represented a superior state of civilization.

771 Now, we need only furnish a few details on Mossi religion. The majority of the Mossi population has remained fetishistic.

771 We saw above that the Mossi, at the time of their great ex-
648 pansion in the bend of the Niger, came into conflict with a Moslemized empire, the Mali empire, and that the second Songhay empire also led redoutable religious crusades against the Mossi. Under such circumstances the Mossi were bound to regard Islam as a foe. It is true that later the destruction of the second Songhay empire by the Moroccans (1591) brought peace to the Mossi on their northern frontier and freed them from the fear of Moslem invasion. The Yarsé settled in turn among the Mossi, and owing to their intelligence, industry, and capacity for trade, created for themselves a well-respected position. This was bound to incline the Mossi favorably toward Islam, or at least to lessen their prejudices and

771 their traditional fear. Nevertheless, Captain Lambert says that
648 prior to the French occupation, Moslems were forbidden by the
[798] Moro Naba to /585/ say their prayers (kella) publicly. They merely recited their rosary (sɛ́ki) silently.

797 Since the French occupation, the Mossi have lost all their prejudices against Islam, because they have been conquered by a different foe. In addition the Moslems tell them, as they do everywhere else in West Africa, that the Whites will only be vanquished and will only leave the country when everyone has become a Moslem. This leads the Mossi to start salaaming, and actually it is probable that there have been more conversions to Islam among the Mossi since our occupation than prior to it. This result, which may appear strange at first, is indubitable. Actually these conversions, although more numerous than they used to be, are still rare if we consider that the enormous majority of the Mossi population and the territory as a whole remains fetishistic.

Let us proceed to a description of Mossi religious customs.

781 First, the funeral ceremonies.

755 When a Mossi is ill he summons a soothsayer (bara in Mossi). The latter takes some earth and looks at it to see what will happen to the sick man. Then he states either that the latter will get well, on condition of obliging with a sheep and a chicken, or else that he will die. In the first case the requested chicken and sheep are brought to the bara, and then, if the sick person gets well, he gets something else, a sheep or 5,000 cowries. If the sick person dies, contrary to prediction, the family merely says that the bara was a liar and nothing else happens.

764 If the deceased is a man, it is the family elders who care for him. They stretch his limbs and even his fingers so he will not turn rigid immediately, and they close his eyes. Then one of the elders washes the corpse with cold water in the presence of the whole family. After this, the elders sew a shroud with cotton bands to wrap around the deceased, and then he is rolled up in a mat.

The soukala chiefs (we know that among the Mossi every household head is the head of a soukala) are buried in the courtyard /586/ of their soukala, or else before its gate. The grave diggers are fetched, and they dig a hole the size of a man, lay the corpse at the bottom, and place boards above it to prevent the soil from weighing

9:Skinner E-5 (1955-1957)1960 FA28 Mossi FA28



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646 all the chaos would come a new appreciation for the task of the chief, and a cessation of the grumbling that the chiefs were greedy.

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428 The Mossi interregnum also served another purpose. It gave the electors the opportunity to exhaust and redistribute much of the patri-
661 mony of the dead ruler, which was brought to them by his heirs who were trying to obtain the chieftainship through bribery. Sometimes, a candidate's ability to collect a great deal of goods with which to press his suit often revealed to the electors the strength of his following in the district or village, for had he been an unpopular man he would have had to use only his own resources.

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643 The Mossi electors were always concerned with the health and
175 character of a potential chief, and turned down the most promising candidates who were deficient in any of these qualities. For example, when Moro Naba Sanum died in 1890 without leaving a male heir, his younger brother, Bokary Koutou, was the strongest candidate for the *nam*. Yet he was passed over, at first, by the electors because of his reputation as a bandit and a rebel. We know from Captain Binger, a Frenchman who met Bokary in 1888, that this prince was indeed a bandit and a slave raider. But Binger, although deploring Bokary's conduct, exonerated him on the grounds that the Moro Naba had sent him into exile without any means of support. This was true, but the
[687] reason that Moro Naba Sanum did so was because Bokary had raised a rebellion against him as an attempt to obtain their father's position. Bokary was forbidden to appear in the capital; but when he heard that his brother Sanum was dead, he took a force of soldiers and hurried to Wagadougou fearing that an attempt would have been made to prevent his election. When he found that his fears were justified, he became
[669] desperate and secreted a force of Gurunsi warriors around the elector's meeting place, threatening to kill them if he was not named Moro Naba. They succumbed to his threat and he received the *nam*. During
643 the customary speech in which a new ruler chose his official name,
175 announced his program for the people and the country, or ridiculed his erstwhile competitors, Bokary Koutou said: "A hundred ghosts cannot frighten an elephant (Wobogo)," meaning that he was not afraid
648 of any of his enemies. He thereafter became known as Moro Naba
721 Wobogo, and he chose to live up to his boast when the French arrived
175 and asked him to sign a treaty of protection with them. He refused

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and chose to fight, and when defeated, fled to the Gold Coast (Ghana). From here he intrigued with the British against the French and even succeeded in having his brother poisoned for accepting the title of Moro Naba. It was only when the British accepted French sovereignty over Mossi country that Bokary accepted his deposition and permanent exile.

Once the traditional electors had chosen one of Bokary's younger relatives, Siguiri as Moro Naba, the Mossi people themselves quietly accepted French rule. Their behavior was in this respect similar to that of many indigenous populations with complex political institutions who had been conquered by the Europeans. In contrast, the neighboring Dogon, Gurunsi, and Lobi, whose political systems were very simple, and who had been constantly raided by the Mossi for slaves, kept on rebelling against French rule, and in some cases shot poisoned arrows at French tax collectors and labor recruiters as late as 1941. The only opposition which they offered the French was in 1910 when an attempt was made to reorganize the Mossi districts for administrative reasons. However, when the French changed their policy of direct administration to a form of indirect rule, the Mossi remained so peaceful that by 1922 there was only one administrator for every 60,000 inhabitants.

Moro Naba Kom who reigned from 1905 to 1942 skillfully preserved the power of the ruling dynasty during a period when the Mossi people were subjected to a rather severe forced labor regime. This was also a period during which the administration deposed chiefs who ran afoul of its wishes or policies. The political ability of this ruler is best exemplified by the order of succession that occurred in the Doulougou district. In 1895 Moro Naba Wobogo had appointed his own son as Doulougou chief in place of Koabga Wedraogo whom he had deposed and killed. However, when Wobogo fled from the French the next year, his son, the Doulougou chief, killed himself because he did not wish to follow his father into exile. The new Moro Naba Siguiri placed a son of the former district chief, Koabga Wodraogo, as chief of Doulougou. This chief died in 1906 and was replaced by a brother. Unfortunately this chief ran afoul of the French, was deposed and placed in "obligatory residence" in another district where he died in 1927. The Moro Naba then elected another son of ex-

10:Hammond E-5 (1954-1956) 1964 FA28 Mossi FA28
Yatenga



position of the set in Mossi society. In the years immediately following initiation the members are much involved in group activities, e.g., the arrangement of social dances, courtship, and co-operation in work groups composed of male and female age-sets, and during this period joking is important. As the members attain adult status the groups tend to lose their structural integrity; their minor corporate functions dwindle and ultimately disappear as the responsibility of the young people to their kin groups increases. With this shift in emphasis, joking behavior also diminishes.

While it lasts, however, this type of joking likewise has a structural context characterized by the attributes already identified. Age-sets are structurally separate within the age-grade. Their relations are reciprocal: individual members co-operate in the arrangement of one another's sexual liaisons; they pool their labor and share the profits they earn as members of their co-operative work organizations; and young men often leave Yatenga as migrant laborers in groups organized on the basis of age-grade membership, thereby reinforcing many of the reciprocal ties established in the work groups. The ambivalence characteristic of the relationship is perhaps best explained as the rivalry of peers. Since there is no status hierarchy within a Mossi age-grade, the age-sets are structurally equivalent and independent.

### *Intervillage Joking*

When intervillage joking is institutionalized it may involve all the members of each community. However, I believe it is particularly expected of their respective chiefs. In either case, the participants are separated by their differing political affiliations. The inhabitants of each village are expected to reciprocate in one another's defense, to be mutually hospitable, and to co-operate in the regulation of land tenure at their frontiers. Ambivalence derives from a history of past hostility, dating perhaps from an earlier period when competition for new land was keener and the expanding kingdom did not yet encompass all the villages now within its borders. Such villages are always structurally equivalent in status within the political system, and each is independent of the other.

### *Joking Between Ethnic Groups*

The joking relationship which the Mossi maintain with the Gurunsi and the Samogho peoples, among others, appears to involve the same structural characteristics. However, I learned of this relationship only shortly before I left Yatenga, and a more certain statement concerning it must therefore await further research. It is certain that such joking occurs; I am unsure only of the number of other ethnic groups involved[9] and of the relevant details of their historical relations to the Mossi of Yatenga. The groups involved are again separate. There is an expectation that members of each group should extend hospitality and assistance to members of the other. As with villages whose inhabitants joke, the participants in this relationship are ambivalent in their attitudes; the present expectation of co-operation is coupled with a past

10:Hammond E-5 (1954-1956) 1964 FA28 Mossi FA28
Yatenga



tradition of hostility. Such groups obviously have both equal and mutually independent status.

## The Processes of Mossi Joking

I have already suggested that the significance of joking as an adjustive mechanism is derived from the manner in which it provides concurrently for the operation of three interrelated but analytically separable processes. These are *communication*, *control*, and *catharsis*.

As a means of communication, joking provides a permissive and flexible context in which a grievance can be expressed, thus allowing for its rectification and the restoration of amity. As a means of control, the public nature of most joking serves to shame the object of the jocular offensive, to invoke social pressure for his conformity, and to elicit support for the complainant. As a means of catharsis, the joking expression of aggressive feelings reduces frustration and thus serves indirectly to perpetuate the amicable aspect of the relationship in which it occurs.

Joking also gives pleasure. The feeling of triumphant release that follows the successful—and safe—expression of hostile sentiments probably functions to reinforce reliance on joking as an adjustive mechanism. And the intrinsic pleasure of wit may also explain the persistence of joking behavior in the absence of an immediate "structural need" for it.

A more detailed description of one of the relationships already mentioned—sibling-in-law joking—will serve to illustrate these several points. Because of its relation to the pivotal institution of marriage, sibling-in-law joking is perhaps the most frequently used adjustive mechanism in Mossi social structure. The potential for marital conflict is high. This appears to be due to the combined factors of a sexually differentiated enculturative experience that results in marked dissimilarities in adult male and female personality; to an age difference between husbands and wives of at least ten years; to the classic stresses of polygyny; to the subordinate status of Mossi women, particularly of junior wives within their husband's patriclan; and to the possible dissatisfaction of a woman's parents, particularly her mother, at the loss of their daughter's services or at the inadequacy of bride-wealth payments.

Whatever its origins in a specific instance, it is important that this potential for conflict be controlled, for each marriage extends the network of affinal and cognatic ties that link the patrilineage to the larger community. Given a persistent potential for strife, the preservation of marital stability requires the provision of a means for minimizing its deleterious effects. When conflict occurs, the resultant frustration must be reduced, and accord must be reestablished in a manner that does no serious damage either to the marriage itself or to the larger context of social relations in which it is embedded. Sibling-in-law joking helps to accomplish this.

If, for example, a Mossi is irritated by his wife's performance of some aspect of her duties in the household or the field, he need not address her directly in order to communicate his dissatisfaction and release the tension he feels. To do so in a culture which places a high value on indirection in emo-

11: Skinner FA28 Mossi FA28

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/For a history of the relations between the Mossi and various European powers, particularly the French, see category 116, pp. 143-193, 197-200, 202./

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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all the people he found there and seizing all the goods he could find, he burned the city and returned to his own country. The peoples of Mali returned afterwards to Timbuktu and remained there for the next hundred years.[20]

The Yatenga Mossi subsequently warred upon and defended themselves against the Songhai, who had tried to force Islam upon them. The Mossi were among the strongest peoples in the Niger bend area when the Moroccans arrived in 1591, and there were no wars between these two groups.

There has been a great deal of discussion among scholars of Sudanese history about the relationship between the Mossi expeditions into the Niger area and the power of early Mossi kingdoms. Marc believes that the Mossi reached their zenith late in the fifteenth century, when they attacked Walata and Timbuktu for the second time. He writes, "It was undoubtedly during this period that they extended their influence over all the territories where their language is spoken at the present day."[21]

On the other hand, Tauxier believes that the Mossi reached their apogee much earlier, toward the end of the fourteenth century. He notes that this was the period when the Mossi were "propelled by a powerful drive of expanding conquest," which carried them to Timbuktu and its neighboring regions.[22] With the recapture of Timbuktu by Mansa Souliman, however, they turned back and firmly established themselves in Gourma and Yange to the east of Ouagadougou, and among non-Mossi populations in Ouahigouya and Ouagadougou. Tauxier believes that this southern drive made the Mossi sufficiently powerful to reinvade the Niger area and thus control a territory extending from Gambaga in the south up to Timbuktu and Djenne in the north. This second period of success came to a close when the Mossi were defeated by Askia the Great of Songhai in 1497, and by Askia Daoud in 1549 and 1561. After these defeats, they not only abandoned their territories north of Ouahigouya but withdrew into their present boundaries. Tauxier concludes that from this time onward, the bonds between the different Mossi kingdoms grew weaker and the power of Ouagadougou waned.

At the same time, the Mossi kingdoms, principalities, and districts developed their internal structure and continued to absorb the Ninisi population. They also welcomed the Moslem Yarse merchants and refugees who settled in their country and adopted most aspects of their culture.[23] These Yarse refugees were joined by Mandingo-Dioula and Soninke Moslem refugees, who entered Mossi country as the result of wars or rebellions in such places as Djenne, Segou, and Timbuktu. The sheltering of these refugees by the Mossi eventually led to a series of wars between them and

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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the Bambara in the mid-eighteenth century.[24] In the course of these wars and up into modern times, many Fulani (Peulh or Fulbe) entered Mossi territory. The circumstances surrounding their first coming are not fully known, but many of them claim to have come originally from Fouta-Djalon and Fouta-Toro. They gained the good will of most of the Mossi rulers and spread throughout the territory.[25] Many of them married Mossi women, giving rise to a new group known as Simili-Mossi, who continued to raise cattle but also practiced agriculture and adopted many of the cultural traits of their hosts.[26]

There are some reports that Europeans had heard about the Mossi exploits at least from the time of King John II of Portugal, who reigned from 1481 to 1495. Marc states that the Portuguese ambassadors to Mali and Timbuktu convinced their King that the Mossi were Christians, and that he attempted to enter into relations with them. According to Barth, these attempts were made as late as 1533.[27] Unfortunately, we have no way of knowing whether the Mossi even knew about the existence of the Portuguese. After this period, there is no evidence of European interest in the Mossi until the end of the nineteenth century. As we shall see in a later chapter, the Mossi received more than their share of attention when the scramble for Africa began.

644 Under him were the Kos Naba, who levied taxes on general merchandise sold in the markets, and the Nemdo Naba, who collected taxes on meat sold in the markets and was responsible for distributing meat within the royal household. Most of these positions were hereditary, but here primogeniture was not as important as in the ruling and administrative lineages.

The various foreign groups in the capital also sent representatives to the court. Among them were the Zangweoto Naba for the Hausa, a Naba for the Songhai, and an Imam for the Ouagadougou Moslems. Even total strangers such as the early European visitors were placed under the care of a special chief.

The most ubiquitous persons at the Mogho Naba's court were the pages, who were boys between the ages of ten and twenty. These boys were regarded as comparable to the ruler's wives, since they served him in the same manner as ordinary Mossi women serve their husbands at home. They wore women's bracelets and women's clothes, and dressed their hair in the same style as the royal wives. As we have seen, they were forbidden sexual intercourse until they were released from the royal household.[22]

173 644 The institution of pages is said to have originated sometime in the seventeenth century, during the reign of Mogho Naba Waraga. Before his reign, the wives of the Mogho Naba attended him at court. The change came during a lengthy civil war between Waraga and the chief of Riziam territory, who had refused to pay allegiance to him. During five "dry seasons" (five years) of fighting, the Mogho Naba was attended only by a small boy. He found him so efficient that at the end of the war he resolved to employ only page boys and prohibit his wives from attending him at court. This origin is conjectural. However, the use of pages effectively segregated the royal wives from court intrigues, and, once instituted, the practice spread throughout the country.

644 The Mogho Naba had little difficulty recruiting pages. Many of them were the sons of pughsiudse whom he had given to his subjects as wives. In theory, the Mogho Naba could select boys at will, but in practice the pages were usually selected by the ministers and sent to the palace. Most boys willingly accepted service, but some, often with the support of their parents, resisted confinement to the palace. Some ten-year-olds even ran away to escape their impending fate, but they were soon caught and braceleted with the insignia of their new status. Once this had been done, their lineages encouraged them to remain at the palace. Their period of service terminated when they began to "push beards," usually at about eighteen years of age. One district chief claims that ancient Mogho Nanamse used to take the sons of district chiefs as pages and release them only when their

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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Binger reports that the Mossi were divided into "a number of confederacies, more or less independent of each other, whose chiefs were vassals of Naba Sanum, the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou." He found, nevertheless, that although the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou claimed suzerainty over the Yatenga, he could not grant travelers permission to enter that territory.[2]

Crozat, who visited the Mossi in 1890, just two years after Binger, was told repeatedly that the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou had the right to control the destinies of all chiefs who claimed descent from Ouedraogo and Oubri. But he, too, found that the principalities were self-governing and mutually independent, and were united only by the weak bond that attached them all to Ouagadougou. Noting the claims of the people he encountered that Ouagadougou was still supreme, Crozat suggests that "time and circumstances have weakened this sovereignty. The ruler of Ouagadougou is regarded by the other chiefs merely as their senior and the head of their family. They seldom obey him, yet they recognize that in certain cases he has the right to give them orders." Like many Frenchmen who came after him, Crozat concludes, "One will be struck, as I have been, by this political organization in which the waning of the central authority has led to a true feudal system closely reminiscent of a certain period in our own history."[3]

Delafosse tells us that "the authority of the emperor [of Ouagadougou] does not seem to have been ignored within his borders except in very rare instances. The vassal kings, who were brothers, sons, or nephews of the emperor, usually obeyed him. In any case, the emperor did not interfere with the administration [of their territories], and required nothing from them except the payment of taxes and the raising of contingents for any expeditions he might have to organize against outside enemies (the emperors of Mali, Gao, or Segou; Moroccan pashas; etc.). In return, the emperor granted his support to those of his vassals who were unable to command the obedience of their subjects or tributaries."[4]

It appears, then, that although the independent rulers and autonomous princes sometimes recognized the supremacy (if not the seniority) of the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou, they were relatively free to rule as they wished. As possessors of the nam, they claimed and exercised the right to administer the peoples of their realms. It appears, furthermore, that the rulers of Ouagadougou seldom challenged the independence of their confreres in Yatenga, although the latter often disturbed them. For example, when Yatenga Naba Kango (ca. 1754-89) sacked and burned the Ouagadougou district of Yako for sheltering refugees from a civil war, the Mogho Naba did not come to the aid of the Yako Naba. Nor did he take offense when this chief, in order to regain his seat, was compelled to switch his

634 687 against the Mogho Naba. I say "allegedly" because it was never quite clear whether the district chief was at fault or whether the Mogho Naba wanted to replace him for dynastic reasons. For example, Tanga, a district chief, was accused by Mogho Naba Sanum (1850–90) of withholding tribute and of maladministration. The Ouidi Naba who administered Tanga's district advised him to prove his innocence by making a sacrifice on Naba Oubri's tomb, and then go to Ouagadougou and ask the Mogho Naba's forgiveness. 634 687 662 Tanga agreed to do so. But it appears that the Mogho Naba, who wished to place his own father's brother in Tanga's place, did not want a reconciliation. He waged war on Tanga, and seized his relatives, retainers, and cattle. Tanga tried to regain his losses by appealing to his provincial minister, but the minister told him that the Mogho Naba had distributed the livestock and had sold the people to Hausa traders. Moreover, he informed Tanga that he could not help him because the Mogho Naba could do as he [669] pleased. Tanga thereupon decided to take matters into his own hands. He successfully attacked the Mogho Naba's villages, and was still a rebel when the French arrived shortly afterward.[26]

634 687 669 Tanga's action was unusual, for district chiefs seldom risked rebelling against the Mogho Naba when accused of maladministration. In 1895, for example, Koabga, chief of Doulougou district in the province of the Gounga Naba, took poison rather than wage war when Mogho Naba Wobogo accused him of misgovernment. Usually, a district chief who disobeyed an order of the Mogho Naba was summoned to the capital to answer the charge of lese majesty. If he was found guilty, the ruler knocked the bonnet off his head, thus deposing him, and had him strangled. The Mossi seldom [762] spilled royal blood. A district chief who refused to go to Ouagadougou could either kill himself (traditionally by taking arsenic) or resort to civil war.[27] If he chose suicide, he was given an honorable burial as though he had died naturally. If the Mogho Naba sent down an army, however, the offending chief was invariably killed. His compound was burned, his slaves and cattle were seized, and his allies and immediate relatives were compelled to flee. The strength of this tradition is borne out by Tanga's case. He had successfully resisted the attempts of two Mogho Nanamse to bring him to heel, and was still at large when the French conquered the country. [648] But Ouidi Naba Koabga, who had deserted his sovereign and selected Kouka Koutou as Mogho Naba under French orders, had not forgiven Tanga. When the French asked him what additional steps they should take to pacify the country, he asked them to capture Tanga. The unfortunate district chief was captured, placed on an unsaddled colt, and taken to Ouagadougou, where he was ignominiously executed.[28]

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[p.93]

# VI

## WARFARE

The Mossi were proud of their warrior tradition, which had earned them their several kingdoms, principalities, and districts. Even the least district chief had stories about the wars in which his ancestors had wrested their territories from aboriginal populations. These traditions of conquest legitimized to a large extent the power of the Mossi kings and chiefs, who never hesitated to use force in order to obtain tribute, to maintain their rule, and to enforce their authority. The Mossi value fighting ability so highly that even today, when fighting is no longer necessary, most Mossi males in the rural areas carry sticks and other weapons on their shoulders as symbols of manhood. In their view, every man should know how to fight and should be able to defend his village, his district, and his kingdom.

According to tradition, the northward thrust of the Mossi warriors during the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries carried them into the region of the Niger River bend. Here, around A.D. 1329, the Yatenga Mossi attacked and sacked the town of Timbuktu, which belongs to the Mali. When Mali was on the decline during the early fifteenth century, the Mossi again attacked its towns. According to the *Tarikh es-Sudan*, when the Mali ruler appointed Amin-ben-Ahmad jurisconsul of Timbuktu,

> the sultan of the Mossi led an expedition against Benka. The population of that region went out to engage the enemy, and at that time left others sitting around El Hadj. He pronounced certain words on the millet which was being served and asked those around him to eat of it. All of them ate except the son-in-law of El Hadj, who did not because he was related to him. "Now go and fight," said the holy man, "and you will have nothing to fear from the weapons of the enemy." All, in effect, returned safe and sound, and only those persons who did not eat the millet died in the battle. The king of the Mossi was routed, and his troops were chased without having seized anything from the people of Benka. All this thanks to the protection of the blessed person.[1]

Later, the Mossi attacked towns of the Songhai empire whenever they felt strong enough, only to be driven away later by a stronger adversary. Sa'di describes a Mossi incursion into the Songhai empire as follows:

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Sonni-Ali entered Kabara in the year 882 after the Hegira (1477); and it was during the course of the same year that the king of the Mossi entered Sama. In 884 (1479) Sonni-Ali was at Tosoko. . . .

During the month of Jumada I of that year (July 9 to August 8, 1480), the king of the Mossi entered Biro [the Songhai name for Walata] and did not leave until Jumada II (August 8 to September 7, 1480). The siege lasted one month, and during that time he demanded a woman from the inhabitants. . . . After the siege the Mossi king gave battle to the inhabitants of Biro, vanquished them, and took them and their families into captivity. But, as he was returning to his country with his booty, the inhabitants of Biro followed and fought him, and freed their families. Omar-ben-Mohammed-Nadi, who was at Biro at this time, distinguished himself by his valor and ardor during the battle; for he was the first warrior to attack the Mossi king and thus force him to give up the families which had been captured.[2]

A few years later, the Mossi again invaded the area, this time making war on Sonni-Ali himself. The chronicler writes:

Then the prince Sonni-Ali undertook the task of digging a canal leading from Ras-el-Ma to Biro. He was devoting all his effort and a great deal of energy to this task when word reached him that the king of the Mossi had decided to make war on him, and was then leading the attack at the head of his troops. Sonni-Ali was at a place called Chan-Fenech when he heard this news, and he stopped work on the canal right there. God spared the inhabitants of Biro the misfortune which threatened them; for Sonni-Ali, going out to meet the king of the Mossi, made contact with him at a place called Djiniki-To'oi, situated near the town of Kobi behind the river. The battle took place there, and the victorious Sonni-Ali put the Mossi king to flight, and pursued him into his own country. That battle took place in the year 888 (1483).[3]

This battle seems to have represented the high point in the northern expansion of the Mossi, because the next reference to them in the *Tarikh es-Sudan* tells of Askia-El-Hadj-Mohammed's holy war against them. This man, who had usurped the throne from Sonni-Ali's heir, made a pilgrimage to Mecca, and when he returned he decided to convert the pagan masses of the Sudan to Islam:

During the year 903 (August 1497 to August 1498), he undertook an expedition against Na'asira, the king of the Mossi. He took with him the mallam, Mour-Salih-Djaaura, inviting him to give the necessary indications so that the expedition would be a veritable holy war made in the name of God. Mour did not refuse this request, and explained to the prince all the rules relative to the holy war. The prince of the faithful, Askia-Mohammed, then asked the mallam to be his envoy to the Mossi king. The learned holy man accepted this mission; he went to the country of the Mossi and delivered the letter of his master which called upon the king to embrace Islam. Before [787] replying, the Mossi ruler declared that he wished first of all to consult his

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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ancestors who were in the other world. Accompanied by his ministers, he went to the temple of the idol of the country. The learned holy man went there also, in order to see how one went about consulting the dead. They began by making the customary offerings; then a very old man appeared. At his appearance everyone prostrated himself and then the king announced the object of his visit. Calling upon the names of the ancestors, the old man said: "I will never agree to this step for you. On the contrary, you must fight until you or they die to the last man."

Then Na'asira replied to the mallam: "Return to your master and tell him that between us there will be only war and combat." Remaining alone in the temple with the personage who appeared in the form of an old man, the mallam questioned him in these words: "In the name of God Almighty I ask you to declare who you are." "I am Iblis [Satan]," replied the deceiving old man; "I have led them astray so that they will all die in a state of unbelief."

Mour returned to prince Askia-El-Hadj-Mohammed and reported all which had come to pass. "Now," he added, "your duty is to fight them." Straightway he launched his war against them, killed a number of their men, devastated their fields, plundered their habitations, and took their children into captivity. All of the men and women who were taken away as captives were made the object of divine benediction [converted to Islam]. In the entire country, no other expedition outside of this one had the character of a holy war made in the name of God.[4]

The rulers of the Songhai appear to have kept up their attacks on the Mossi during the following hundred years. One of them, Askia Daoud, launched an expedition against the Mossi in 1549 to celebrate his accession to the throne. He attacked and defeated them again in 1561 while on his way to attack Bornou, and their ruler "abandoned the country with all his troops."[5] After this and several other crushing defeats, the Mossi refrained from attacking Songhai territory. Their ardor for external adventures apparently cooled after this period, and there are no reports of their fighting anyone else except the Bambara of Segou in the eighteenth century.[6] Of course, Mossi chiefs made local forays among smaller neighboring groups such as the Busansi, Gurunsi, and Samogo, but only to catch slaves.

During the nineteenth century—a rather chaotic period in the western Sudan—the Mossi appear to have been immune from outside attacks. Crozat, who visited them in 1890, states: "From the very first, in Mossi country, one feels that one has entered a new land, more peaceful, richer, and more populous [than other African countries he had visited]. . . . The people one meets on the roads are workers on their way to the fields, or are carrying wares to the neighboring market. They are not like the Songhai and the Bobo, who always carry bows on their shoulders."[7] The immunity of the Mossi from attack by such intrepid nineteenth-century

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warriors as El Hadj Omar and Samory Touré surprised and puzzled many of their early visitors. Binger explains it as follows:

> Thanks to the primitive tribes that surrounded them like a rampart, the Mossi were spared the incursions of their powerful neighbors. This immunity cannot last much longer, because [Mogho Naba] Sanum is weak, has little spirit, and is badly counseled.[8]

Binger was partly correct in attributing the immunity of the Mossi to the presence of weaker groups on their borders. To the military adventurers of the period, the Mossi must have appeared invulnerable when compared to their weaker neighbors. Nevertheless, the Mossi declare that it was their vigilance and willingness to fight that prevented Samory Touré, among others, from invading their country.[9] They claim to have captured and executed nine of the ten spies he sent to survey their territory. The one spy who returned allegedly told Samory Touré that the Mossi were too strong to be attacked, because they banded together against all outsiders.

Crozat attributes the Mossi freedom from attack to miraculous and magical factors:

> There is widespread belief in surrounding territories that Mossi country is inviolable. Alone amid the troubled populations that surround it, it enjoys relative peace. It owes this to the very special protection of a deity, and also to the virtues of the special talismans owned by the ruler of Ouagadougou. The terror inspired by these charms is such that some years ago the leader of Gadiari's column suffered a mass desertion of his men when he tried to lead them to the conquest of Mossi country. He himself was killed, perhaps by his own *sofas* [soldiers]. This case cannot be expected to undermine belief in these presumptuous charms.[10]

This statement, like Binger's, contains an element of truth, but not in the way that Crozat believed. The Ouagadougou kingdom did have a series of ritual pacts with neighboring Mossi and non-Mossi groups. Crozat found that Mogho Naba Sanum was on "good terms" with the people of Fada-N'Gourma. He tells us that this friendship was maintained by a "curious custom" whereby the Ouagadougou ruler sent wives, captives, and horses from his predecessor's estate to the ruler of the Gurmanche.[11] Similarly, Pinchon, a British officer stationed in the Gold Coast at the beginning of the century, reports that there existed an ancient pact between the Mossi and the Mamprusi. This pact kept the ruler of each country from attacking the other on pain of death by the ancestors. Like the pact between the Mossi and the Gurmanche, this agreement was sanctioned by an annual gift of a horse, slaves, and cloth from the Mossi to the Mamprusi. Pinchon speculates that it was the existence of this pact that induced the Mamprusi

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ruler to grant asylum to Mogho Naba Wobogo in 1897. He adds that it was probably the injunction in the pact that they should never meet which prevented the ruler from personally receiving Wobogo.[12]

A ritual pact also bound the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou to the ruler of Dagomba. He sent him goods from the estate of the previous Mogho Naba as well as gifts for yearly sacrifices on the grave of Nyennega, the Mossi progenitrix. There are reports that the Ouagadougou ruler also exchanged annual presents with the Ashanti ruler, but it is not known whether these were courtesy gifts or goods sanctioning ritual pacts.

The ritual pacts among Mossi kingdoms and between them and their neighbors appear to have derived from actual or putative kinship ties. This seems to be supported not only by the traditions of the Mossi but also by those of the surrounding peoples. Whatever their origin, these pacts seem to have afforded their beneficiaries a remarkable degree of freedom from external aggression. It is possible that the Mossi and their neighbors really believed in the efficacy of supernatural sanctions, for purposes of mutual protection. But one suspects that it was the relative weakness of these various groups that caused them to rely on supernatural agencies rather than military might for protection. As will be pointed out below, the Mossi (and probably all of their important neighbors) had considerable difficulty in building and maintaining a fighting force sufficiently large to wage protracted or large-scale wars against foreign groups.

The Mossi kingdoms seldom fought among themselves, although their leaders quarreled over status and committed aggression against each other's territories. For example, the Ouagadougou rulers, who claimed suzerainty over Yatenga, often tried to impose their will on that kingdom. Yet, although they were usually rebuffed by the Yatenga Naba, they never tried to resolve the issue by force of arms. In fact, even when a Yatenga ruler appears to have given the Mogho Naba just cause for war, little fighting actually took place. Several times the Yatenga rulers seized such principalities as Riziam and Yako, which were dependent on Ouagadougou, but in no case did the Ouagadougou rulers wage war against them. In 1890, Crozat witnessed Mogho Naba Wobogo's attempt to stop a war between Yatenga and Yako. The Yako people wanted to obey their sovereign and stop the war, but the Yatenga monarch refused to do so.[13]

Crozat attributes the ineffectiveness of the Mogho Naba's authority over brother kingdoms to the fact that he had no standing army with which to enforce his rule. While relative strength may have been and probably was the main reason for the Mogho Naba's lack of aggressiveness, the ritual pact that prevented the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou from meeting the

628 642 643 175 [648] Yatenga Naba (and other rulers) or treading on his territory should not be overlooked. The suggestion that force was not the only consideration was lent force by later events. The French conquest later reduced the rulers of both Ouagadougou and Yatenga to impotence and obviated war between them, yet they did not meet until 1946—some fifty years after the conquest. They met then only because they had to represent their subjects at a meeting to plan the restoration of the Upper Volta and reunite all the descendants of Oubri and Ouedraogo into one territory.

Relative strength obviously played an important part in determining whether one Mossi kingdom interfered in the internal affairs of another. For example, when a Tenkodogo ruler asked a Mogho Naba to help him suppress Busansi subjects who had rebelled, the Mogho Naba readily complied.[14] But when a fratricidal struggle over the nam broke out in Tenkodogo in 1894, the Mogho Naba decided not to intervene even though he was asked to do so.[15]

628 643 669 175 The central governments of the various kingdoms found it necessary to wage war against their subordinate territories at regular intervals. In the Ouagadougou kingdom, most of these wars seem to have been administrative actions against a prince or district chief who had contravened an order from the Mogho Naba or refused to pay tribute. The Dimdamba were the Mogho Naba's most rebellious subordinates, and it was against them that he fought most of his wars. Characteristic of these wars was the series between Naba Ligidi (1866–90), Dim of Boussouma province, and Mogho Naba Sanum.[16] Ligidi had seized and turned over to the Mogho Naba the recalcitrant Naba Yemde, then Dim of Boulsa, and confiscated the rebel's property. Later on, when the Mogho Naba had made peace with Yemde's son, Naba Kiba, he asked Ligidi to surrender the seized property. Ligidi refused to do so, and the angry Mogho Naba sent the royal army into his territory. The army sacked and burned several villages and retreated. Ligidi's forces skirmished with the rear guard but abandoned pursuit near the Ouagadougou border.

Ligidi took his revenge by helping a district chief who had rebelled against Naba Kiba. While he was thus engaged, the royal army again attacked and defeated him. Four days later, it reinvaded Boussouma, engaged Ligidi's forces at a place called Goudri, and won a brilliant victory. Despite Ligidi's furious counter-attacks, the army captured his capital, Ouayougya. The ruler's army finally returned to Ouagadougou, satisfied that Ligidi was thoroughly beaten. But the Mogho Naba had underestimated Ligidi's tenacity. For the next ten years, this Dim waged war against his fellow Dimdamba. The Mogho Naba finally grew tired of his depreda-

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tions and launched another expedition against Ouayougya. The expedition failed because of a lack of water, and the army was forced to return to Ouagadougou. The war would have continued had not both Mogho Naba Sanum and Ligidi died in 1890.

It appears that the Mogho Naba tolerated fighting among his immediate subordinates, and seldom intervened in local wars unless one of the combatants openly flouted his authority. For example, when the autonomous principality of Riziam attempted to wrest control of Salmetenga district from Boussouma province, Mogho Naba Doulougou did not intervene. He knew that Salmetenga owed allegiance to Boussouma, but was perfectly willing to allow its ruler to transfer allegiance to Riziam. When Boussouma was on the brink of defeat, the Salmetenga Naba fled to Ouagadougou to seek asylum. The Mogho Naba sent him back to Naba Piga, the Boussouma Dim, with the request that he be allowed to live. Piga was so angry with the chief that he ignored the Mogho Naba's request and executed him. This incurred the wrath of Mogho Naba Doulougou, and he sent an army to attack Piga. Fortunately for this disobedient Dim, the Mogho Naba died and the attack was called off.[17]

The reaction of Mogho Naba Koutou to fighting among his subordinates was more typical. He did not interfere in a long series of battles between the principalities of Riziam and Mane which culminated in 1866 when the Riziam people seized, imprisoned, and executed several Mane merchants who had gone to buy salt in Timbuktu. Mane appealed to its brother province of Boussouma for aid, and Riziam appealed to a Fulani chieftain for reinforcements. Before a battle could ensue, however, the Boussouma Dim, Naba Siguiri, died after drinking some millet beer, and the fighting was called off. Naba Kom of Mane then went off alone with his army, defeated the Fulani, and killed their chief, Sekki. When Ligidi (the chief mentioned above) succeeded his father, Naba Siguiri, he elected to continue the war against Riziam with the help of the Mane army, but the battle was inconclusive. The stalemate did not satisfy the bellicose Ligidi, who attacked Riziam once more in 1871, burning villages and seizing property. The Riziam people finally rallied and halted him. They ambushed his soldiers when they tried to retreat, and harried them so thoroughly that Ligidi had to call off the war when slaughter and thirst decimated his ranks.[18]

Similarly, Mogho Naba Sanum did not interfere when one of his own district chiefs, the Salogho Naba, was attacked and defeated by the ruler of Tema principality. Nor did he enter the fray when another of his district chiefs was attacked and defeated by the Boulsa Dim. The fighting in both

cases was over women. The Tema Dim successfully defended his principality against a Zittenga district chief who not only had the effrontery to demand the return of a wife who had fled into Tema but also invaded the principality when she failed to return.[19] The Boulsa Dim attacked and defeated the Salogho Naba when he refused to repatriate a man and woman convicted of adultery who had fled into his district. It is possible that in each case the Mogho Naba refused to become involved in a squabble over women, but it is more likely that he refrained from participating in a local war that did not threaten the security of the entire country.

Many Dimdamba made it a practice to help each other in wars against common enemies. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Naba Zende of Tema and Naba Totoabo of Yako joined in a war against Naba Sebogo of La when Sebogo refused to repatriate one of Totoabo's wives, who had fled into his territory. The two victorious allies burned villages in La and forced Sebogo to flee for his life. They searched for the woman, but she was never found. The successors of the three rulers remained embittered by this war and eventually renewed the fighting. On this occasion, Naba Tanga of Tema and Naba Sagha of Yako fought against Naba Kombase of La. But this time Yako and Tema were unable to defeat La and had to withdraw. There is no evidence that the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou took any part in these wars.[20]

The Mogho Naba appears to have taken a greater interest in wars between his Dimdamba and non-Mossi populations, and to have profited by them occasionally. When the followers of a Fulani chief named Karfo carried off some cattle belonging to the Boussouma people, the Boussouma Dim, Naba Siguiri, threatened war if the animals were not returned. Karfo not only refused to surrender the cattle but insulted Siguiri in his reply. Siguiri marched against the Fulani, killed Karfo, seized all the cattle he could find, and sent some of the "most beautiful animals" to Mogho Naba Koutou.[21]

Although the Mogho Naba tolerated wars among his Dimdamba, he apparently forbade the district chiefs under his direct command to fight among themselves. As we saw in Chapter IV, some such fighting did take place, but the Mogho Naba seems to have ignored it in most cases because of its relative unimportance. The Mossi, on the other hand, magnified this local fighting, which they called *tengkom* ("civil war"), and which consisted of mere skirmishes between villages or neighboring districts, with few casualties. In fact, the Gounga Naba once stopped a war between districts after only nineteen persons had died. But as a rule, districts seldom if ever fought among themselves. The actual combatants were villagers

3. Finally, a third lot, composed of young girls and young boys, was distributed among the warriors and put into their charge. The boys will be employed until further notice as grooms to the warriors; later on, those who prove themselves useful and docile will be kept. The others will be sold at the first opportunity. The girls will be given in marriage to warriors who distinguish themselves.[24]

The military campaigns of the Mossi, in contrast to their slave-raiding expeditions, appear to have been well organized. When the Mogho Naba felt that a war was necessary, he summoned his five provincial ministers and the Tansoba to a parley. If war was decided upon, the Tansoba was given full charge of all operations. This man, chosen from a hereditary clan of warriors who lived in a village called Tansob'tenga in Sapone district, was listed among the Mogho Naba's courtiers but seldom appeared at court unless war was imminent. His duties as chief warrior were considered so dangerous that he constantly sought out religious practitioners for supernatural aid. Nevertheless, a war minister who was good and brave was not expected to live very long. If he did live to become gray-haired, the other courtiers made fun of him by pretending that his graying head could only be the result of his having carried a sheep captured in warfare on his head as a present to the ruler.

Once given a mandate for war, the Tansoba collected his magico-religious apparatus and prepared the requisite sacrifices. He then asked the provincial ministers to notify the district chiefs to assemble with their warriors under the leadership of the local Tansobadamba, who were often members of the Tansoba clan. When the district chiefs received this notice, they beat their *zongagondo* (war drums), and the local administrators sent orders for men to the village chiefs. The village chiefs, in turn, beat their war drums to summon their noble cavalrymen and commoner foot soldiers, who came armed with bows and arrows, spears, swords, and clubs, with or without iron tips. The tips of the sharp weapons were often covered with a vegetable poison derived from a shrub of the Strophanthus species. Some of the men also carried guns after firearms were introduced among the Mossi from the desert region and from the coast. Many carried rawhide shields.

As soon as the village contingents had assembled and had gathered their provisions, they marched to the district centers. Then they proceeded either to the place of battle or to Ouagadougou. In the latter case, they became part of the royal army and were joined by the forces of those princes who were prepared to honor their obligation to the Mogho Naba. For example, when the French invaded Ouagadougou in 1896, the Boulsa Dim sent his prime minister "at the head of an army to aid Mogho Naba

Wobogo. However, he did not have to intervene, because while still en route he heard that Ouagadougou had fallen."[22] Thanks to this type of aid, the Mogho Naba was able to gather quite a large army, a fact that contradicts Crozat's belief that the Mogho Naba was a "king without an army."[23]

The early Mogho Nanamse used to accompany their armies into the field, but this practice was later abandoned and was revived periodically only by the more adventurous rulers. (The last ruler to die in warfare was Mogho Naba Doulougou [ca. 1800].) However, it was the Mogho Naba's duty to greet the army when it came to Ouagadougou, to beat the royal war drum, and to turn the troops over to the Tansoba. This officer served as commander in chief of the army, and was assisted by the Gounga Naba, a provincial minister, who served as his aide-de-camp. The Gounga Naba was expected to die rather than retreat in battle, especially if the Tansoba was killed. Two other ministers, the Kamsaogho Naba and the Larhalle Naba, also accompanied the army. The later Baloum Nanamse did not venture into battle, because they had to attend to the personal needs of the Mogho Naba. In early times, however, they accompanied their sovereigns into battle and fought alongside them. The Ouidi Naba never went to war, because it was his duty to look after the kingdom. He had to ensure the interests of all the people even if the royal army was defeated, the country invaded, and the ruler killed or forced to flee. The Samande Naba went to war and served as chief of the infantry.

Scouts preceded each district contingent as the army marched off to battle. Within the contingent, the younger warriors marched in front, followed by older men. It was the duty of the more experienced warriors to make sure that the younger men did not break ranks and run under the stress of battle. Behind the foot soldiers came the cavalry, composed of nobles and of the few commoners who possessed horses. Behind these came the district chief, surrounded by his own palace guard. Several heralds known as *yumba* (sing. *yuma*) accompanied the district forces to exhort them to fight. As the men marched to battle the yumba shouted:

> Men! Your ancestors were not slaves. They were men. They were stronger than anyone else. They did not bathe with water; they bathed with blood. Do you wish to return home to drink millet water and eat bread? Never! A man does not eat bread or drink millet water; a man fights. Your ancestors were not afraid of anyone; you must not be afraid of anyone. Even if you are killed today, you must march ahead, beat your enemies, and take their villages. You must not be afraid!

Mossi armies on the march used scouts to keep a sharp lookout for the enemy or for any evidence that he was aware of impending attack. The tactics these scouts used to avoid detection, such as camouflaging themselves

726 with leaves and branches and crawling upon the ground, can be witnessed
[964] even today at Mossi funerals where men re-enact warfare practices. Whenever possible, the Mossi preferred to take the enemy by surprise, but this was seldom possible when large-scale fighting and massive preparations were involved.

When two Mossi armies drew up to each other, the heralds from both sides issued such challenges and epithets as: "If you men do not wish to die, you should run or you will never eat again. We will have your blood to wash with." In the meantime, the Tansobadamba on both sides deployed their forces in accordance with the number of men available, the spirit of
[723] the enemy, and the nature of the terrain. From the description of warfare given to me by an old Tansoba in Nobere district, it appears that the strategy most commonly used was to split the infantry in two while attacking, thus making room for the cavalry to charge through. If the initial charge was successful, the attack was maintained, but if it failed, the army usually turned about and fled. Despite their braggadocio, Mossi commanders seldom insisted that their troops fight against overwhelming odds.
[644] However, shame over impending defeat often induced such officers as the
[645] Tansoba and the Gounga Naba to fight to the death. For example, during the war between Boulsa and Fada-N'Gourma in 1897, the Boulsa army lost so many men that the Boulsa Dim wanted to commit suicide in his humiliation. However, he was prevented from doing so by one of his subordinates.[27]

Soldiers wounded by poisoned spears or arrows extracted the projectiles if possible, and kept on fighting until they died. Even if they were wounded
[789] by an unpoisoned weapon, they did not seek medical aid. Most wounded men believed that they were doomed, because their protective amulets had
[727] failed them. For the same reason, a defeated army fleeing a battlefield made no attempt to retrieve its dead and dying, but left them to the vultures. When an army was victorious, however, the Mossi either carried their dead home for burial or buried them on the battlefield, saving some item of their clothing or equipment for the funeral.

Victorious Mossi armies usually pursued the enemy, burning villages as
[648] they went. The soldiers killed all the infants and the infirm, and when they
[567] fought against non-Mossi, they captured young people to be sold as slaves. Then they collected all the available booty and departed hurriedly, fearing
[727] that the confiscated cattle and slaves would slow their return and enable the rallied enemy to catch up with them.[28] If the army could not return home before dark, camp was set up for the night near a body of water so that the Tansobadamba could offer thanksgiving sacrifices. Pickets were later

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posted to alert the troops in case the enemy should attempt an attack at dawn. If the war was waged against foreigners, individual soldiers were allowed to keep a slave or a cow out of the booty; the remainder was divided between the district chiefs and the central government. In victorious civil wars against the enemies of the Mogho Naba, however, the entire booty was sent to the capital.

When the Mossi had to defend their own territory, their most common tactic was to evacuate the villages. This was the technique most often employed against invading French forces.[29] Other defenses included palisaded villages, barricades of fallen trees, trenches, and hedges, some with poisoned foot traps. Mangin reports that the Boulsa were defeated in their war with Fada-N'Gourma not only because their enemies fought valiantly, but also because they "were favored by very propitious terrain covered with thorny scrub, behind which the besieged men took cover to shoot on the Mossi."[30] Mangin does not say whether the scrub was poisoned, but his data indicate that this type of defense was common in the area. The Mossi say that the use of poisoned prickly plants (*silenage*) against invading forces dates back to the early conquest of the territory. Tradition recounts that Naba Oubri was unable to conquer Ouagadougou until his Ninisi wife advised him to shoe his soldiers against the poisoned foot traps of the aborigines.

Mossi wars or raids were usually limited to the dry season and stopped at the beginning of the planting season. Commenting on the war between Boulsa and Fada-N'Gourma, Mangin tells us: "This was during the dry season. Thirst completed what the courage of the Gyekango people had begun, and many Mossi perished."[31] Tradition recounts that it took Mogho Naba Waraga five successive years of attack before he defeated Ramzi, the rebellious chief of Riziam principality. He finally defeated him when his army attacked the province before its people had been able to harvest their crops and retire into an impregnable fortress for the dry season. Judging by the reports of European visitors, this type of dry-season warfare continued as late as the 1890's. For example, Crozat could not understand why the Mogho Naba did not send an army to defeat the chief of Lalle district, who had imprudently raided a village near Ouagadougou, and he concluded that the ruler did not have an army. The fact is, however, that Crozat was in Ouagadougou between September 9 and September 30, a period when the potential soldiers of the Mogho Naba had not yet harvested their crops. Had Crozat remained in Mossi country for three or four months longer, he would have seen the ruler's army in action; for, as a matter of fact, the Lalle Naba's attack on Mogho Naba Wobogo was but the latest episode in a prolonged struggle between the two rulers.

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726 For several years Mogho Naba Sanum had tried unsuccessfully to corner
628 and defeat the rebellious Lalle Naba. Then one dry season the Mogho Naba
669 called his Tanŝoba and said to him:

> "I want you to assemble immediately an army composed only of courageous men, to go to Lalle and bring me, alive, Tanga [also called Wobogo], chief of that district." Several thousand men, eager for glory, were gathered, and the army advanced against Lalle. It managed to burn Siguele, Tanga's residence, but did not capture the chief, who had fled to Koudougou. The royal army would have pursued him, but because the rainy season was imminent, and the men were needed to work in the fields, the army returned to Ouagadougou with a considerable amount of booty. The king received his war minister very kindly, because he foresaw the impending defeat of his obstinate enemy. The Mogho Naba then said to his warriors, "Go and cultivate your fields, but remember that as soon as the harvest has been stored, you have to capture Tanga. Regardless of the cost, I must have him, even if all of you must die."[33]

Mogho Naba Sanum died before he could capture Tanga, and the task fell to his successor, Mogho Naba Wobogo, who fared no better. One dry season, the royal army chased the rebel into Gurunsi territory but failed to catch him. They would have continued the chase, but "it was during the rainy season, and the royal army was disbanded."[33]

● [648] Mogho Naba Wobogo never succeeded in capturing Tanga, because the French came in and conquered the Mossi. Nevertheless, the rebel did not go unpunished. After the French had completed their conquest they asked the Ouidi Naba what steps should be taken to ensure peace. He told them to capture and kill the Lalle Naba. This unfortunate chief was hunted down, captured, placed on an unsaddled colt, and brought to Ouagadougou, where he was publicly humiliated and then executed.

701 The episode with Tanga and the limiting of warfare to the dry season
726 indicate that the Mogho Naba did not have the resources to maintain a standing army, and, therefore, had difficulty exerting his authority by the use of force. There is no doubt that the Mogho Nanamse were able to gather very large armies at specific times against both internal and external enemies, but when the planting period came the soldiers had to attend to their crops. This lack of resources also limited the power and authority of Mogho Nanamse over their autonomous subordinates. As a result, the Mossi kingdoms remained segmentary in nature, and became highly organized only at certain periods of their history.[34] The availability of military resources thus had a significant effect on the nature of the Mossi governmental and political system.

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631 651 643 114 [648] [669] because of this delinquency, the Mogho Naba might hesitate to come to the aid of any of his vassals if a general war broke out. It is true that the Mogho Naba did not aid the Yatenga ruler when the French arrived. But whether this was because of his failure to pay taxes, or because the French conquest of the Yatenga coincided with a civil war there, we shall probably never know. We do know that many of the Mogho Naba's vassals came to his aid when the French finally arrived at Ouagadougou. It is my opinion that the gifts exchanged between Yatenga and Ouagadougou were not "tributary," but were more in the nature of tokens of friendship between two peers.

643 645 692 651 [431] The Mogho Naba and his provincial ministers also received revenue as a function of their judicial roles. The nature and disposition of the fines levied against legal offenders were discussed in Chapter V. The Mogho Naba's fees came in the form of the traditional gifts the litigants gave him even before their cases were tried. These gifts were never regarded as bribes, for this would have contradicted the Mossi axiom that "the truth is at Ouagadougou."

643 651 634 768 [428] The Mogho Naba inherited all the property of the Kamsaogho Naba, and claimed all the property of district chiefs who died without close relatives. He also received inheritance taxes (fado) from the estates of deceased district chiefs. In collecting the fado, the Mogho Naba first retained the horse on which the messenger came to announce the chief's death. He reciprocated by sending envoys with cowries and animals to be offered to their common ancestors at the chief's funeral. After the funeral, the envoys claimed the dead chief's quiver of arrows to take to Ouagadougou for deposit with those of other dead chiefs. Then they demanded the fado, and jestingly told the heirs that the Mogho Naba would be satisfied with nothing less than "a thousand of everything" (*tusri bumbu fa*) the deceased had possessed: wives, slaves, horses, cows, goats, chickens, articles of clothing, and so on. The heirs pleaded poverty and jokingly gave the envoys a few old and sickly animals, old chickens, tattered pieces of clothing, etc. Eventually, they handed out the fado, which usually consisted of livestock, clothing, food, weapons, jewelry, cowries, and even slaves. Lastly, they gave the envoys the chief's ceremonial horse and presents for themselves.

643 645 651 439 [487] The Mogho Naba and his ministers collected a considerable amount of revenue from the traders who visited Ouagadougou and the larger market towns and village markets throughout the kingdom.[9] The Mossi (especially the assimilated Yarse) were good traders, and they benefited from their country's strategic location between the Sahara and the forest regions. According to Barth, some six caravan routes crossed the country, linking

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pleted, the remainder of the ceremony followed the pattern of the Ouagadougou ritual.

During the weeks that followed, the village chiefs and the heads of the larger lineage segments all offered sacrifices to their ancestors. The Poughtiema of each prominent local administrator, chief, or lineage head prepared and poured the millet water as a libation to the ancestors. Whenever possible, each of these personages invited musicians to sing praises to his ancestors. He dressed in his best robe and sat outside his hut to receive presents from his relatives, friends, and subjects, along with their best wishes for the new year, and for long life and prosperity. In return he gave them kola nuts, beer, and food. Thus, in celebrating the Basgha, all the Mossi were united in prayers and supplications to the ancestors, upon whom rested the future of their country and the successful reign of the descendants of Ouedraogo and Oubri.

The earth deity, Tenga, held the central place in the second major religio-political ceremony which linked all Mossi. This ritual, called *Tense* (from *tenga*, "earth") and sometimes *Naba Oubri ma koure* ("the anniversary of the funeral of Mogho Naba Oubri's mother"), was so important to Mossi cohesion that it was banned by the French, and as a result its main features are now unclear. According to tradition, Naba Oubri loved Poughtoenga, his Ninisi mother, so much, and was so pleased with the elaborate funeral he gave her, that he decided to repeat this ceremony each year in the hope that his subjects would be blessed with the bountiful crops and herds which had made the first one possible. Curiously enough, Oubri's mother was not a central figure in the Tense celebration. Instead, great stress was placed on the fructifying powers of the earth and on the importance of the royal ancestors in Mossi life. The juxtaposition and association of the earth deity with Oubri's mother has important implications for the Mossi political organization. Mossi tradition holds that a Ninisi woman was the ancestress of the Mossi of Ouagadougou. Her people probably celebrated the Tense as a fertility rite to their earth goddess, Tenga. The Mossi apparently took over the ceremony and used it both as a fertility rite and as a memorial festival, thus symbolically uniting the conquerors and the conquered.[9]

In contrast to the Basgha, no special date appears to have been set for the celebration of the Tense. It was held sometime before the crops were sowed, but according to Tauxier it was not celebrated at all in Ouagadougou when the previous year's harvest had been poor.[4] Before setting the date for the festival, the Mogho Naba summoned the Larhalle Naba and ordered him to have sacrifices made on the graves of all former rulers. This minister

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between the living and the dead," but also to strengthen the political bonds between the Mogho Naba and his chiefs, down to the humblest elder of a Mossi compound.

In addition to the Basgha and Tense, the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou appears to have offered another yearly sacrifice to Tenga. Each year, after the Basgha, the Mogho Naba, the Baloum Naba, and a large entourage reportedly visited a large earth shrine called Tantibo in the vicinity of Sabatenga to offer propitiatory sacrifices in the name of all the people. When the royal party arrived at Sabatenga, they were joined by the Sabatenga Naba and his Tengsoba. The group proceeded to the foot of the sacred hill, and here the monarch dismounted, took off his bonnet and shoes, and climbed the hill. He made the customary Mossi salute at the shrine and looked on silently while the Tengsoba sacrificed animals and poured libations of millet beer and millet water in supplication for the health and prosperity of the Mogho Naba and all his people.[7]

When evil befell Mossi country in spite of the annual sacrifices to the ancestors and to the earth deity, the Mogho Naba had to offer additional sacrifices. If the country was plagued by drought, the ruler went to an earth shrine in Ouagadougou itself, called "Kom be paspanga" (literally, "water is strong there"), for a sacrifice. Moreover, he might order all his district and village chiefs to perform similar sacrifices to the earth shrines within their territories. In Nobere district, for instance, the district chief went to the village called Barkago, where, standing barefoot and bareheaded on the hilly shrine known as Beta, he ordered the local village chief and the Tengsoba to offer sacrifices for rain and good health.

It is generally believed by the Mossi that when the French attacked Ouagadougou, the deposed Mogho Naba Wobogo made sacrifices to earth shrines. Tradition has it that he sacrificed a black cock, a black ram, a black donkey, and a black slave on a large hill near the White Volta River, beseeching the earth goddess to drive the French away and to destroy the traitor Mazi whom they had placed upon the throne. When Mazi died, the Mossi people believed that he had received his just deserts from the earth shrine for treason. The French believe that Mazi was poisoned.[8]

The district and village chiefs, like the Mogho Naba, were required to make propitiatory sacrifices to the earth shrines on behalf of their subjects. Before taking office, a district chief was ritually shown the major earth shrines in his territory, and he could not ignore their existence and their need for sacrifices. In a country with major local variations in rainfall and localized animal and human epidemics, the Tengsobadamba of stricken areas always called upon the local chiefs to help them propitiate disgruntled spirits.

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spirits. The chiefs could not refuse such requests, especially when the villagers were poor, because they were regarded as "fathers of their people." In some cases, however, district chiefs had to protect their subjects against unscrupulous Tengsobadamba who took advantage of local crises and tried to prey upon the villagers by refusing to perform the requisite sacrifices unless they received substantial gifts. The ensuing struggle was between the secular and the sacred; between the chief as a representative of the conquerors, and the Tengsoba as a member of the conquered group. It was always resolved in favor of the Mossi chief, who never permitted his Tengsobadamba the same privileges held by religious practitioners in neighboring societies.[9] The Mossi chiefs recognized that they needed the Tengsobadamba, and many myths recount how invading Mossi chiefs went into the woods where the Tengsobadamba were hiding to beseech and eventually force them to return to their districts so that sacrifices might be continued. On the other hand, the Mossi chiefs always insisted on the primacy of the nam over any other power. They employed the Tengsobadamba to intercede with Tenga for the welfare of their subjects, but they never allowed the priests to control them.

The coming of Moslems to the kingdom of Ouagadougou had little effect on the way in which the Mogho Nanamse used the traditional religious system to bolster their political power.[10] In fact, the Mossi rulers later used Islam and its adherents in the same manner as they had used the aboriginal religion. The Moslems first tried to subdue the Mossi in the fifteenth century by persuasion, and later by the jihad. Both attempts failed, but the Moslems finally entered Mossi country as refugees from Sudanese wars. Their fortunes waxed and waned, depending on whether they were befriended by the ruler in whose territory they lived. During certain periods, they were subjected to many restrictions and were forbidden by the Mogho Naba to recite their prayers in public places.[11] At other times, they were left free to practice their religion, and even succeeded in converting several Mogho Nanamse to Islam. Under converts such as Savadogo (ca. 1760), Islam spread into many districts and gave rise to such important local centers as Sakhaboutenga (Dakay).

The Moslems in Ouagadougou were represented at the court by their Imam. This person even received his badge of office—a white turban and white robe—from the Mogho Naba, and had to swear in the name of Allah and *Nabiyama* (the prophet Mohammed) to be faithful to him, obey him, and aid him in times of need. However, he did not have to drink the namtibo as suggested by Dim Delobson; nor did he have to observe such non-Moslem customs as drinking the millet beer the Mogho Naba provided for

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his guests.[13] On the contrary, when the Imam visited the ruler on Fridays or during important festivals to read from the Koran, the sovereign gave him sweetened millet water and appropriate gifts.

Most Mossi rulers at all levels had Moslems among their councillors. These men were often the only persons who had traveled extensively outside the country (on pilgrimages to Mecca), and thus could counsel a ruler about how to deal with foreign visitors. Most early European visitors to Mossi country were either helped or hindered (chiefly the latter, it seems) by these travel-wise councillors. Crozat had difficulties with the Moslems long before he arrived in Mossi country proper. When he got to Lanfiera, the Mossi who lived there were alarmed, and refused to help him proceed to Ouagadougou despite his protestations that "I come for the good of all, white and black, that we may be together like brothers, since the same God has made us all." Crozat reports that his plea was in vain because "El Hadj All-Karl declared that he would not receive me, and he will not receive me. El Hadj is wise, El Hadj is prudent, El Hadj knows all, El Hadj does not make decisions without good foresight, and once made, he keeps them."[13]

Crozat had the same difficulty when he entered Mossi country. He tells us, "At Dounse [near Yako], for example, the marabouts did not look favorably upon my arrival, and it took a great deal of insistence on the part of Moussa to convince the Imam, my unwilling host, to present me to the chief who had expressed the desire to see me."[14] Crozat also found that he had to lodge with the Imam when he arrived at Ouagadougou, and he was assigned the same huts "which had served Captain Binger," who had visited the capital before him. He was disappointed with his reception and declares:

> I already knew from experience what sort of influence these men exercised over the chiefs. As a councillor of the chief, the Imam was overtly acknowledged as the second official in the village, but in reality he often commanded it. The Imam of Ouagadougou, therefore, could do much to help me or to hurt me. My decision to court him might flatter him, and that would be a move in the direction of winning his good graces, which, all things considered, was most important to me. The result was only partly in my favor. I succeeded insofar as the Imam was not hostile to me, but he did not help me as he might have.[15]

These Moslem councillors realized better than most other people what the visits of the Europeans implied for the independence of the country, and they tried their best to counsel the monarchs against receiving such visitors.

Beginning with Mogho Naba Doulougou (ca. 1750) Mossi sovereigns, whether Moslem or pagan, participated in the more important Moslem festi-

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gift every year to the Imam and to Karamakho Isa, for whom he has great veneration. These are old and wise men who cannot but give him excellent counsel.[18]

The relations between Boukary Koutou and the Moslems of the Sakhaboutenga district show how Mossi chiefs, though pagans, were able to establish viable political bonds with potentially hostile believers of another religion. Boukary Koutou was probably a Moslem "in outward appearance only," as Binger suggests. Nevertheless, it was by being Moslems of this kind that Mossi rulers managed to retain the allegiance of their Moslem subjects. This was their duty as "fathers of their people," and apparently they did it without much hesitation. In this manner, they effectively used religion to bolster their power and sustain their authority.

Ritual connections between the Mossi rulers and the chiefs of surrounding countries enabled them to protect their subjects from foreign attack and to maintain internal cohesion. The numerous reciprocal gifts between the Mossi and such other Voltaic groups as the Dagomba, Mamprusi, and Gurmanche were based on the belief in descent from a common ancestor or ancestress. Ritual and the supernatural thus played an extremely important role in the cohesiveness of the Mossi kingdoms and in the functioning of their governmental processes. Without these ritual factors, it is doubtful whether the Mossi rulers would have been able to maintain such a relatively high degree of control over their subjects, given the relative weakness of their economic resources, communications, and armed forces. In trying to understand why the Mossi retained their autonomy for so long, one must take into consideration the statement made by a French officer a year after the Mossi were conquered: "We must not lose sight of the fact that [the Mossi] have always presented a common front to strangers, and that a single word of command is sufficient to unite them against the invader in the name of kinship and national unity."[19]

The phase of Mossi political history that began when Nyennega left Dagomba and moved northward came to an end with the European conquest. Most French scholars believe that the Mossi were in a state of decadence at the time of conquest and might have fallen to such African conquerors as El Hadj Omar, Samory Touré, or Baba To. The fact remains, however, that these conquerors all skirted Mossi country without entering it. If these African rulers believed that the Mossi were invincible in their unity, it was because the Mossi, through mythical bonds of common descent and actual bonds of kinship, had welded themselves into a cohesive and powerful group.

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gions to ascertain whether the people desired reunification. Duglas reported his findings to the National Assembly:

> You know as well as I do that the Mossi are proud of their past. Thanks to a political and social organization without peer in West Africa, they have known peace since the Middle Ages, in an Africa ravaged by war and depopulated by the slave trade. . . . This ancient land also desires prosperity and modernization. To achieve this its voice must be heard, not only in the National Assembly but particularly in the Grand Council [the highest consultative body] of French West Africa. The Upper Volta must have its own General Council.[20]

The law authorizing the reconstitution of the Upper Volta as a separate territory was promulgated on September 4, 1947. The non-Mossi populations of the projected territory feared Mossi domination and voiced their opposition in the Assembly, but in the end an accord was reached. The Mossi chiefs next petitioned the French government to pay for the rebuilding and refurbishing of Ouagadougou. François Bouda, one of the few traditional Mossi nakomce to become an elected representative of the Mossi, reminded the members of the Council of the French Union of what had occurred in 1919. He stated that his own father had recruited thousands of men to make bricks for "Bancoville" (an epithet for Ouagadougou; most of its buildings were of sun-dried bricks called *banco*) because Governor Hesling "never considered the possibility of purchasing cement, which was not even expensive. Forced labor was easy to recruit, and no one thought that the day would come when it would be gone."[21] Bouda said that the Government should now help the new territory to modernize the capital.

D'Arboussier, an RDA delegate in the Assembly, declared that he would support the bill, if only because in the past the French government had attempted "to make a crack race horse out of an ordinary horse, and in so doing had made it a decrepit mare."[22] Funds for rebuilding Ouagadougou were finally voted, and the "Bancoville" of French West Africa began to take on a new look with wide avenues, large administrative buildings, official residences, and even a new palace for the Mogho Naba.

With the reconstitution of the Upper Volta, the Mogho Naba and his chiefs attained their highest prestige since the conquest. The chiefs even had strong influence over the Mossi representatives to the organs of the French Union, because of the decisive support they had granted them in the elections. But this increase in prestige was to be short-lived. The chiefs were no longer the sole representatives of their people, and the Mossi were no longer isolated from events in other parts of the Upper Volta, or for that

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000 19. There is a curious story among the people of Nobere district that Mogho Naba Mottoba (who reigned in the seventeenth century) was not a Mossi but a Fulani who was given the nam after he chanced upon the installation ceremony and assassinated the newly elected man during the night. This story is denied in Ouagadougou; in fact, it contradicts the genealogical records of the ruling dynasty. However, the genealogy does show that Mottoba's father, Mogho Naba Guiliga, had succeeded his brother, and it is possible that there was dynastic rivalry for the nam between Mottoba and the former Mogho Naba's son.

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20. This rite was performed during the installation of the present Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou, although it is hardly recognizable as described in *Newsweek* (December 9, 1957, p. 48): "A man named Moussa Congo assumed the name of Kougri Naba last week and became the 35th Mogho Naba of the Mossi in the capital city of Ouagadougou in the Upper Volta region of French West Africa. Son of Emperor Issoufou Congo, Kougri Naba, as the new Mogho Naba, has one white horse, 200 wives, and 8,000 warriors, who danced around his palace ten times."

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21. This practice has apparently lapsed since Mogho Naba Kougri moved into the modern concrete palace built for his father, Mogho Naba Sagha II.

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22. Tauxier, *Le Noir du Soudan*, pp. 569–70. Tauxier claims the Mogho Nanamse used the pages for homosexual purposes on Fridays in order to circumvent the Moslem prohibition against intercourse with women on this holy day. Homosexuality is rare among the Mossi, as Tauxier himself admits, and most Mossi deny that the Mogho Nanamse ever resorted to it. However, one respondent did state that he had heard about homosexuality among certain past rulers.

23. Crozat, p. 4849.

[648] [762] [797]

24. When Mogho Naba Kom II died under mysterious circumstances in 1942, it was rumored that he had committed suicide rather than reduce the number of his wives as ordered by the administration under the influence of the Catholic missionaries. Kom allegedly held that no one can inherit a sovereign's wife during his lifetime. Therefore, in order to avoid loss of status by seeing his wives go to commoners, he chose death so they would be inherited by nobles.

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25. The statement in *Newsweek* (December 9, 1957, p. 48) that Kougri has two hundred wives is untrue.

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26. Intermarriage between the Mossi and the Fulani has produced a people known as the Simili-Mossi. Nevertheless, the Mossi are strongly prejudiced against the Fulani, especially against the women, stating that the Moaga who has sexual intercourse with a Fulani woman must bathe in nine different rivers before he becomes clean. The basis of this prejudice appears to be that Fulani women are not cultivators and therefore are unacceptable as Mossi wives.

27. Mossi women know a great deal about the history and traditions of their people. But they never indicate that they do except during such rituals, when they are required to play certain roles.

28. Dim Delobson, p. 96.

29. Dim Delobson (p. 101) states that there are "sacred things" in this village, but I have been unable to substantiate his report.

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30. Dim Delobson (p. 104) gives the classic explanation of this nighttime ride. On his ride from Bere to Djiba, the mounted prince must try to touch a certain branch of a certain tree. If he is destined to succeed his father, he will succeed in touching the branch; if he is not, the branch will magically withdraw at his approach.

I visited the area in which this ritual reportedly took place, but the people in the vicinity denied that such a tree existed.

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31. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

32. IFAN (Compte Rendu No. 429). There are many other rumors concerning Kom's death. In a book praising the loyalty of the Africans to the Free French Gov-

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ernment of Charles de Gaulle, Deveze declares (p. 74): "Moreover, the Mogho Naba, himself king of the Mossi of Ouagadougou, one of the most powerful dynasties of French Africa, who was placed under surveillance by order of Boisson [the local Vichyite commander] and separated from his subjects, committed suicide after calling his son and solemnly commanding him not to take power 'until the true French should return.'" If this is true, the heir to the throne either could not or would not follow his father's advice.

33. Today a girl is usually chosen as Kourita, because it is easier to banish a woman than a man from the capital. Nevertheless, when Mogho Naba Kom II died in 1942, the young girl chosen to be Kourita was hidden by her mother, and as a result the funeral and the investiture of the new ruler were delayed.

34. See Cheron, "La Cour du Boussouma Naba" (pp. 304-12), for a description of the court of the Boussouma Naba, an autonomous provincial ruler.

35. Dim Delobson (p. 8) claims that the Mogho Naba had the right to ratify the nomination of all Dimdamba, and that it was he who gave them their insignia of office.

36. Cheron, "Contribution," p. 651. He also reports (p. 654): "The Boulsa Naba was elected by a special college. In principle, the choice of this college always fell on one of the sons of the deceased, generally the eldest."

37. *Ibid.*, p. 672.

38. Dim Delobson (p. 143) claims that the person who was asked to give a sacrificial animal to the Baloum Naba was thus assured of the nomination. But the Nobere chief with whom I discussed this matter insisted that he and all the other claimants had given sacrificial animals, and that he did not know he had been chosen until he was notified by the Ouidi Naba.

39. Despite a legend which says that a young woman once ruled the Doulougou district as regent for her young son, the choice of district chief was always a man old enough to rule. If a chief's heir was still a boy, the nam was given to another relative and no provision was made for it to return either to the boy or to his descendants. Unless the boy were fortunate, neither he nor his line ever received the nam again.

40. The ingredients used by the Baloum Naba in preparing the namtibo are kept secret. Most people believe that he uses some elements of the royal amulets, blood, and other liquids. It is not known whether the blood used in ancient times was that of a slave or merely of an animal. Most of the district chiefs with whom I discussed this point reacted with horror to the implication of cannibalism, and insisted that the blood was from animals sacrificed the previous day. However, commoners believe that human blood was used.

41. A fact of great importance in understanding Mossi expansion is that the Kouritadamba of the Nobere district chiefs were banished to the Gurunsi region of Gourounga on the other side of the Red Volta River. The last Kourita from Nobere is now living in that area, where he rules over a Mossi population drawn from Nobere district and Manga district.

42. Cf. Mangin, p. 19.

## CHAPTER FOUR

1. Cf. Socquet, p. 62.
2. Barth, III, 643, 648; Binger, II, 479.
3. Crozat, p. 4822.
4. Delafosse, II, 128-29.
5. Tauxier, *Le Noir du Yatenga*, p. 90.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 93, 100.
7. Crozat, p. 4849.
8. Delafosse, II, 29.
9. Mangin, pp. 12 ff.
10. Cheron, "Contribution," pp. 673-74.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 654-55, 657-58.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 680.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 670.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 685-86.

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15. *Ibid.*, p. 673.
16. Delafosse, II, 128–29.
17. Binger, II, 502.
18. Crozat, p. 4849.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 4822.

20. The structure of the Mossi kingdoms and their relationship with the autonomous principalities make it difficult to determine the exact number of districts within each unit. For example, the Mossi people always claimed that the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou was sovereign over "333" chiefs (cf. Binger, I, 502). However, since the Mossi always associate the number 3 with males, any number giving a multiple of threes is suspect. Binger stated that some of the chiefs referred to as part of the 333 were no more than village chiefs. However, Tauxier (*Le Noir du Soudan*, p. 567), describing the kingdom of Ouagadougou, states, "At the top of this hierarchy is the king, the Mogho Naba, paramount chief of the Mossi, residing at Ouagadougou. To give at least an idea of the relative importance of this empire, without going further than, say, the cercle of Ouagadougou, there were eight provinces comprising 300 *cantons* [districts], 5,000 villages or small towns, and 861,700 inhabitants."

While voicing the myth that the Mogho Naba had "under his control 333 chiefs or Nabas," Dim Delobson actually gives only about 150 chiefs in his list of district and other chiefs (pp. 46, 288–97). It was impossible for me to get any idea of the number of chiefs, because the Mossi hierarchy has changed radically since 1905.

21. Dim Delobson, p. 63.
22. Cheron, "Contribution," p. 651.
23. The Mossi did not acknowledge the defeat of Mogho Naba Wobogo by the French until the Ouidi Naba surrendered to the invaders and installed a ruler they had chosen.
24. Archives, Document 1G-334. Lambert describes Karfo as "a curious figure who unfortunately is not well known."
25. Binger, I, 465.
26. Dim Delobson, pp. 15–45, *passim*.
27. It appears that the monarchs found fault with their district chiefs most readily when they had sons or other relatives in need of districts to govern. Since a possessor of the nam could not be deprived of it while alive, he had to be accused of some crime and executed. Koabga was replaced as Doulougou Naba by Lassanne Congo (called Naba Kouliga), a son of the Mogho Naba. On the other hand, when Naba Pusha of Nobere district fled rather than commit suicide or start a civil war, he was replaced by his own brother, who became Naba Soulougou.
28. Dim Delobson, p. 44.
29. Cheron, "Contribution," p. 655.

## CHAPTER FIVE

1. Mangin, p. 25.
2. Mangin does not discuss rape, but reported that an "abductor" was beaten and put in irons. The girl was returned to her family, and if she gave birth to a child, it was killed (pp. 26–27).
3. Dim Delobson, p. 55.
4. Most of my informants state quite clearly that the district chiefs did not have the right to impose the death penalty, but could do so if they were discreet about it and did not take advantage of their subjects. But Dim Delobson states: "Contrary to what people generally believe, the Kombere—the chief of the *canton* [district]—also had the power of life and death over his subjects. How many persons have been put to death only because they were wealthy? How many village chiefs have been killed by the district chiefs in their territories without the Mogho Naba's intervention?" (pp. 55–56).
5. Dim Delobson (p. 56) insists that justice was free of charge, but added that

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# CHAPTER 9

## *Trade and Markets Among the Mossi People*

BY ELLIOTT P. SKINNER

The Mossi represent the dominant population of the Voltaic Republic, numbering about 1,600,000 out of some 3,200,000 inhabitants. They represent the unique example of a group which has preserved its ethnic identity and political autonomy through all the vicissitudes of Sudanic history until it was conquered by the French in 1896. Tradition records that the people who became the Mossi left the Dagomba region in present-day Ghana during the eleventh century and moved into the bend of the Niger River, carving out three large kingdoms and smaller principalities in the process. At the head of these still extant kingdoms are rulers *(Moro Nabas)* who formerly held feudal-like control over the provinces, districts and villages which comprise their domains. The villages, with their patri-local, polygynous, extended family households, formed the basic Mossi settlement pattern. A complex hierarchical administrative apparatus carried the power of the Mossi rulers into the smallest villages, and funneled taxes and tribute back to them. This structure still exists, but of course it has been modified by the French.

The Mossi were and are still divided into stratified royal, noble and commoner patrilineages. Characteristic of this lineage system is a process by which royal sub-lineages descend serially until they merge with the mass of commoner lineages. Below the lineages there once were large non-Mossi groups of serfs and slaves, but these people have now been grouped into lineages and have become Mossicized.

The topography of Mossi country is typical of the Sudanic grasslands. It is an immense plain, some 1,500 feet above sea level and broken only by three low mountain ranges and numerous small hills. The annual total rainfall is between 30 and 40 inches, and falls almost entirely as heavy showers or thundershowers during the period from June to September. So narrow is the margin of rainfall for successful crop cultivation that any variation in the cycle results in low crop yields and a difficult "hungry period" the following year before the new crops are harvested. The Mossi do not practice irrigation, and would have trouble doing so because the three Volta Rivers which drain their territory serve as drainage chiefly during the rainy season. Only the Black Volta has water all year round; the

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175 437 Dupuis, who replaced Bowditch in Kumasi in 1817, obtained surprisingly good data on trade relations between the Ashanti and the Mossi, considering the reluctance of the middlemen traders to furnish any help in this matter. He discovered that Ashanti traders

[103] . . . sometimes travel as far as Aughoa, the Magho, and to the east of Kasogho. Aughoa is distant from Coomassie twenty-five journies by the Salgha and Yandy Roads, which would give a distance of three hundred that vegetable substance . . . by the name of Shea butter. (Dupuis 1824 : App. cvii)[1]

The Hausa merchants and caravaneers knew a great deal about the Mossi and their resources, but it was only with great difficulty that Clapperton persuaded Sultan Mohammed Bello of Sokoto to give him the following information:

[101] The country of Mouchier or Mouchi is situated to the west of Ghurma. It is vast and possesses a gold mine, rivers, forests and mountains. It is inhabited by tribes of the Sudan who possess many fast horses, and large donkeys. Their king is called Wagadougou; their asses are sent down to the Gondja to carry the drums of the army. (Clapperton 1829 : 323)

It is obvious that either Clapperton or his informant confused the capital of the Mossi with their king, and included parts of Ghana in [23] their territory. Nevertheless, one does get an indication of the importance of livestock in Mossi trading.

The great bulk of the trade between the Mossi and their neighbors to the north and to the south was done through the medium of 175 caravans which crisscrossed their territory. The first person to signal 437 the existence of these caravans was Barth (1859 : III, 646–648) who, 487 although he did not enter Mossi country during his extensive travels in the Sudan from 1849 to 1855, reported the existence of several caravan routes which traversed the Mossi from the desert to the [103] forest. The first route he described proceeded from "Kirotashi, a town on the east side of the Niger, one day south of Say, to Woghodogho." [366] Ten days out of Kirotashi caravans usually reached Tengkodogo, and on the thirteenth day they arrived at Koupela which according to

(1) The Aughoa referred to here is really "Wagha," the term often used by the Mossi [43] when talking about their capital, Waghadougou. Magho is really "Mogho" the name of Mossi country itself, and Kasoagho is the name of a province of Wagadougou commanded by a minister of the Moro Naba, the Kasoagho Naba. Dupuis' report on the actual distance between Kumasis and Waghadougou is almost the same mileage as that [366] of today. Koelle (1854 : 6) received a report from a slave liberated in Sierra Leone in 1854 that the great Mossi trading center "Kupeala is four days from Wardugu, the [648] Mossi capital, whither the king of Asante often sends presents; and one month from Salak (Salaga), an Asante town, where they bring their cola-nuts."

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175 366 437 54 their own commercial centers, they acted quite differently outside their country. Dubois reports that at Timbuktu, "the great town of pleasure" with the freest morals in the Sudan, the merchants from Bamako, Djenne, Sansanding and Touat spent a great deal of money in pleasure and in gifts to the beautiful women, but the "Mossi did not waste their money and left as soon as they had finished their affairs" (Dubois 1899 : 292–300).

175 437 439 ●648 The days of the caravans are now over in Mossi country, even though large groups of traders carry on the traditional commerce in livestock, cotton, kola nuts, some dried fish, and salt. As soon as the French conquered th country they formulated plants to control the caravans. One of the earliest reports, for June 1899, reads:

> The country is calm and direct administration was established at Koupela, Mane, Yake . . . The Mossi trade is mainly with the English colony of the Gold Coast. It consists mainly of livestock, very plentiful in Mossi country, which is exchanged for merchandise from England; copper and material goods . . . Our task will be to discover the materials of the northern Ivory Coast which could be exchanged for cattle, and when this information is forthcoming we should be able to direct the caravans quite easily to the Ivory Coast. At the same time the English will see their provisions of cattle and sheep diminish. They will flood us less with their cotton cloth, with their glass beads, and with their kola nuts. In their place, the products of French manufacture can arrive to us through the Ivory Coast after being exchanged for the products of our colony there.[8]

439 167 464 These plans did not succeed. The Mossi still export a great deal of their products towards the forest zones of Ghana, including their "numerous laborers" which, according to Beauminy writing in 1919, were "the principal riches actually utilizable in Mossi country". (Beauminy 1919 : 71–78). The migrants themselves are, in a sense, the greatest traders in contemporary Mossi society.

## PRESENT-DAY TRADE

439 [441] [472] [178] [113] There is a constant flow of goods between Mossi country and the Ivory Coast and Ghana. Much of the trade to the former region is in the hands of the large commercial companies and as such is beyond the purview of this paper. What is of interest here is the trade which is conducted by the ordinary people. A great deal of this trade is highly unorganized and the result of one or two men, or as many as five men, joining together to trade goods to and from Ghana and the Ivory Coast. The types of goods sent down to these two areas are the same as those traded in pre-European times.

(8) Unpublished document in the archives of *Institut Français d'Afrique Noire*, Wagadougou, Voltaic Republic.

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same as those traded in pre-European times. For example, my notes for March 22, 1956, record that five young men were transporting 50-kilogram sacks of onions on their bicycles for trade in Ghana. On March 23, the next day, I wrote the following: "This appears to be the season of increased trade and the donkey trains are passing to and from Wagadougou and the Yatenga to Po (a town on the Ghana-Voltaic Republic border) and Bolgatenga in northern Ghana. Very often the donkeys carry nothing down, and at other times they are loaded with beans, millet, cotton bands, onions, peanuts and other vegetable produce. On the return trip they are laden with kola nuts going northward. This afternoon I counted twenty-eight asses coming from Ghana and going towards Wagadougou. Eighteen of them were laden with kolas, and ten were carrying long pieces of scrap iron which I was told, were to be converted into hoes for use during the coming planting season."

There is also a steady trade in livestock between Mossi country and the southern lands but the height of this trade occurs just prior to Ramadan. Beginning from one month to one week before this important Moslem feast day, the roads of Mossi country are clogged with thousands of sheep and goats being driven south for the use of religious households in Ghana and the Ivory Coast. Cattle are also shipped during this period, but not in the same volume since they are most often used collectively by Moslem families too poor to have their own sheep or goat.

The total volume of trade between Mossi country and Ghana and the Ivory Coasts is difficult to ascertain since despite the existence of Customs Posts a great deal of contraband trading takes place. My notes for December 12, 1955, read *"Contraband":* Two customs men came into the village to complain to the district chief about the behavior of Naba, one of his village chiefs. This is what happened: About two days ago, two agents saw in the forests the tracks of some thirty-five asses (heavily laden as can be seen by the depth of the tracks) and the marks of a bicycle with new tires. The agents followed the tracks all day and rested during the night. Yesterday they had to interrupt their search when the bicycle of one of the agents broke down, and when they resumed the search later in the day they came across five asses laden with kola nuts inside the compound of a man in Naba's village. Since they were forbidden by law to go into the man's compound and seize the animals, they went to the village chief in an attempt to have him tell the man to put the animals outside so that they could be seized. This the village chief refused to do, stating that it was not his affair, and adding that the agents should have seized the animals in the forest. The agents, now helpless, came and

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complained to the district chief. Unfortunately for them the district chief was absent, but his assistants did send out a call for the village chief. However, the chief refused to appear, saying that he would only do so when the district chief returned. The last thing I saw was the agents leaving the district chief's compound still unsatisfied with the whole affair." The sequel to this comes from my notes for December 26, 1955. "I inquired about the aftermath of the contraband case and was told that the whole affair is being referred to the courts at Abidjan. If the village chief is found guilty, he will have to pay a fine of 10,000 francs for the first ass and 3,000 francs for each subsequent ass, or in lieu of this go to jail. Informant said that since the village chief is a poor man, he would probably go to jail."

In spite of the contraband, the actual volume of trade appears to be considerable. The production, trade and export of goods largely produced by the Mossi people in 1954 are set forth in Table 29.

TABLE 29

*Production, Trade and Export of the Mossi (1954)*

| *Product* | *Amount* | *Export* | *Destination* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Almonds | 35,000 tons | 3,602 | France and African countries |
| Peanuts | 50,000 tons | 3,031 | France and African countries |
| Cattle | 1,560,000 tons | 101,000 | Ghana, Togo and Ivory Coast |
| Sheep and Goats | 2,115,000 tons | 238,255 | Ghana, Togo and Ivory Coast |

These figures do not include the numerous items that drift over the frontiers of Ghana and the Ivory Coast with the thousands of migrants who go to these places each year. While the actual number of such migrants is difficult to ascertain, Pierre Dufour believes that it is "about 150,000 men per year, of whom 100,000 go to the Gold Coast and 50,000 to the Ivory Coast". (Dufour 1956 : 3). And since almost every one of these migrants takes with him some trade item such as a chicken or two, a small sheep or goat, a small sack of cereal or other vegetable produce or a few bands of cotton to defray part of his transportation costs, the amount of goods actually exported is considerable. These statistics rarely enter into the account of goods exported from Mossi country, since custom officers do not usually tax migrants for small items, and do not make any record of them. Of course, when the migrants carry large loads, these are recorded and the migrants must pay export taxes.

Greater attention is paid to the goods which those migrants who work in Ghana (but not in the Ivory Coast) bring back with them after one season or after several years of work, since the government of the Voltaic Republic derives a great deal of its tax revenue from duties on these goods.

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The migrants bring back all types of goods with them. According to Dufour: "Money as such is not brought back in very large proportion because manufactured products of the English colony (Gold Coast) cost less. Consequently, each year there is a great introduction of bicycles, sewing machines, fabrics". (Dufour 1956 : 140). One might add to this list kerosene lamps, zinc buckets, all types of wearing apparel, and all manner of household goods. An inventory of the common trunk of two returning migrants revealed the following merchandise: two kerosene lamps, two bottles of kerosene, two burnoose of black serge trimmed with pink silk, one white burnoose, two blue shirts, two khaki shorts, two tubes of Thermogene (a medicated rub), eight women's headkerchiefs, two Moslem fezes, two hand mirrors, two jars of Vaseline petroleum jelly, two pairs of sandals, one black scarf, packs of camphor balls, and one bottle of perfume. These goods represent the migrant's work over one season, from October to the following April, in the cacao fields of Ghana. Other migrants return with more, but few return with less. The actual value of these goods has been estimated by Dufour at about one billion francs C.F.A. per year. The custom duties which the migrants pay amount to more than 150 million francs C.F.A. annually—the sum they actually paid into the treasury of the Haute Volta in 1953 (Rouch 1956 : 139 ff.).

The migrants distribute to their relatives a good part of the goods they bring back, but a large proportion gets into the hands of other people either through the market or through more direct channels. Here is an example taken from my notes of March 24, 1956: "*Trading in bicycles:* Moussa gave Souliman a cow and an old bicycle for a new bicycle which Souliman had bought for 5,000 francs from a passing migrant. Souliman was trying to sell this same cycle for 6,250 francs, thus trying to make a profit of 1,250 francs just two or three days after he had bought it . . . Souliman slaughtered the cow which he received from Moussa and sold the beef to the local *restaurateur* at an additional profit. Souliman appears to be a sharp individual. He recently bought another bicycle for 5,000 francs from a migrant and resold it for 7,500 francs." This type of trading is not unusual, but the most typical articles resold by migrants in the local markets are lamps, worn shirts, shoes and other articles of clothing.

The growth of migration among Mossi men has led to a new type of commercial activity in the country. This is the selling of cooked food by the women to passing migrants. These women and young girls prepare food such as chicken, rice, millet balls, millet flour water and fried cakes which they bring to the principal thoroughfares to sell. Many of them arrive at the central village areas as early as four

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175 436 437 Cowries used to be chief medium of exchange in Mossi markets until the Europeans arrived. In addition the people bartered specific goods for other products. The prices of goods in these markets fluctuated from time to time. Prices were highest during the planting season when most goods were scarce, and lowest during the harvest periods, but we have little precise information about the prices of goods in the traditional markets. Even Barth's information is too sketchy to deal with. Our first reliable data come from Tauxier, whose writings cover the first decade (1896-1906) of the conquest. Using the then official rate of one franc equals 1,000 cowries, the prices of a few representative products were: horses, 40 to 100 francs (40,000 to 100,000 cowries); cattle, 30 to 40 francs (30,000 to 40,000 cowries); chickens, 250 cowries; guinea fowls, 250 to 300 cowries; hides, 3,000 cowries; pottery jars, 300 cowries; cotton trousers, 200 cowries; baskets, 1,500 cowries; and locust-bean balls, 100, cowries (Tauxier 1912 : 466 ff.).

175 435 Mangin, whose work covers the period from about 1910 to 1913, when the value of the franc was lowered to one franc equals 700 to 800 cowries, lists the approximate prices for the following goods; "Millet, 0.02 franc a kilogram; rice, 0.10 franc a kilogram; *fabirama*, 0.05 franc a kilogram; shea butter, 0.50 franc a kilogram; milk butter, 1.50 francs a kilogram; peanuts, 0.07 franc a kilogram; peanut oil, 0.50 franc a liter; one jar of ordinary millet beer, containing about six to eight liters, 0.20 franc; one jar of strong millet beer *(tose)*, containing about six to eight liters, 0.40 franc; hydromel *(bese)*, 0.15 franc a liter; chicken, 0.40 franc; average goat, 3 to 4 francs; large goat, 8 to 10 francs; average sheep, 3.50 francs for a ram, 4 francs, for an ewe; large sheep, 8 to 10 francs; donkey, 25 to 30 francs; horse, 150 francs; small cow (no hump), 50 francs; zebu cow, 70 francs; goat skin, 0.30 franc; cow skin, 1 franc; salt bars, from 1.50 to 2 francs a kilogram; kola nuts, from 0.03 to 0.10 franc apiece; one hoe, about 0.60 franc; cloth: strip of white cloth, 0.05 franc, about 0.60 franc a cubit; white blanket, 2 francs; indigo-dyed blanket, 3 francs; striped blanket, 4 francs; medium-sized shirt, 2.50 francs" (Mangin 1921 : 53). In dealing with these prices, a number of things should be kept in mind: first of all, these prices fluctuated very much during the year; secondly [43] they varied from region to region within the country; and thirdly, although these prices are given in francs during this period, it was still possible to use cowries to buy a large number of the products.

177 436 [43] [42] Enormous changes have taken place in the Mossi economic and exchange systems over the decades following the studies of Tauxier and Mangin. Even before, but certainly after World War I, the French pressure on the Mossi to pay taxes in francs finally resulted

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in the adoption of this currency as the medium of exchange in most markets.[11] The one-franc piece and coins of smaller denominations were those most often used because they were ideally suited to the petty trading that took place in the markets. The franc even became the standard of value in the larger markets, but one receives only 3 local francs for a five-franc note C.F.A. or seven francs for a ten-franc note C.F.A. These changes in value seem to occur by common consensus, since it is impossible to discover who it was that changed the exchange rate. A further fact is that many Europeans remain unaware of these changes since they seldom go to the local markets themselves. When they do go and insist upon the official exchange rate, the "unofficial" market chief appears and takes over the situation, giving the *nansara* ("conqueror" or "master," the way in which every European is regarded) what he wishes.

While the equivalence between the cowrie, the old brass franc, and the franc C.F.A. works splendidly when products are sold in small quantities, I found the system difficult to understand when more expensive goods are traded. For example, when one buys meat, an expensive item, the butcher accepts either the official francs or the local currency and gives change in both. The difficulty here is that since the butcher uses no scales, one is never sure about the price or about the system of value the butcher is using. The most that can be done if one does not receive as much meat as expected is to haggle with the butcher until he adds more. However, this haggling leaves unresolved the problem of the value of one's official money in terms of the unofficial money, and the product which it is intended to buy. One is thus left with the *impression* that there must be an internal consistency to the exchange system, or barring this, that the local people accept the system as it is as a matter of expediency. On the other hand, the vendors of products with fixed prices such as matches, cigarettes and the like appear to make differential profits when they

(11) Mangin (1921 : 61–62) reports that the Mossi had great difficulty obtaining the five-franc piece which they needed to pay their taxes because the "Europeans who live in Mossi country, including all the riflemen and provincial guards do not put into circulation a quarter of the five-franc pieces which are required each year from the natives. At first the Mossi were taken by surprise and had to give 10 or even 15,000 cowries to obtain this famous coin, this *greegree* which was to free them from all difficulties with the white man. And yet at the official rate of exchange this coin is worth 5,000 cowries. Nowadays it is very difficult to find a native willing to give this much for one of the coins. The usual exchange rate varies from 3,500 to 4,000 cowries: the French currency has been depreciated. This must mean that the natives find elsewhere –through trading– this indispensable coin. They know that the tax must be paid every year, and instead of waiting till the last minute, as soon as they have accumulated the necessary cowries they secure the five-franc pieces from those who have fetched them from far away. The coins flow into the country, and the rate of exchange goes down."

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443 taxes in their markets. The French abolished both of these offices
554 when they took over the country, because they looked upon them as
651 purely exploitative rather than regulatory agents. But like so many
656 other Mossi political institutions which the French have "abolished,"
178 the Kos Naga and Raga Naba persist in many of the districts, and per-
● 648 haps even in such large centers as Wagadougou. These officials persist
829 because one of the basic assumptions of the Mossi is that everything
825 must have a "chief." They believe that even the animals in the bush have chiefs, and if men, too, did not have chiefs then social life would be chaos. Thus, in the rural areas many or most district chiefs have retained their market officials even though the roles of these officials have become highly attenuated and so secretive that their existence is often denied.

175 Taxes collected at the market places played an important part in
443 supporting the traditional political hierarchy of the Mossi people.
651 The Kos Naba collected 250 cowries in taxes for every beef cattle
644 slaughtered at the market and took their humps and gave them to a palace official called the Nemdo Naba (meat chief) for distribution in the royal household. He also collected 250 cowries on every cow sold there, but did not usually tax goats and sheep. In lieu of this he occasionally took a head or two of these animals from each herd that passed through the market and sent them to the palace kitchens. Donkeys were also taxed at the rate of 200 cowries per head sold in the market. Horses sold to the nobility were not taxed, but those exported were taxed about 300 cowries.

175 The Raga Naba collected the taxes on other commodities sold at
443 market. Cotton weavers paid him taxes according to the size of their
651 bolts of cloth, and cotton producers paid as much as 20 cowries on
463 especially large sales of their raw produce. The tailors and dyers paid no fixed tax on their wares, but were asked to send clothing to the palace. Every donkey- or ox-load of salt which entered the market place was assessed a tax of 300 cowries. The smiths were not taxed in cowries, but had to supply the wives of the Moro Naba with hoes and the palace personnel with arrowheads, spearpoints and iron clubs. The jewelers also sent bracelets as presents to the ruler. There were no fixed taxes on cereals, vegetables and cooked food sold at market, but each day the Raga Naba, accompanied by several pages or retainers carrying baskets, went from vendor to vendor taking several calabash-fuls of their produce for use in the palace. In addition, the vendors of cooked food had to feed the young grooms of the Moro Naba who were not regularly fed by the palace household. The beer sellers, too, while they were not assessed taxes, contributed a good percentage of their beverage to palace and market personnel who demanded the

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443 due to the bickering, quarreling and even fighting they have to
554 prevent by cooling the tempers of the market people—that they
776 become quite angry. When the spirits are not satisfied, they fail in
782 their tasks and real trouble breaks out in the market, disrupting the trading; and if they are not pacified they may even cause the death of the market officials.[12]

In the days before the market officials were banned, these sacrifices were performed regularly. At that time the Raga Naba simply asked the Kos Naba to seize the appropriate animal in the market to perform
[648] the rite. The problem today is that since the French have abolished the office of Raga Naba, and in some districts have prevented the chief from even naming one secretly, the markets in the latter local-
[208] ities are considered "dangerous markets." Once a market acquires such a reputation, people do not like to visit it because they fear that they would get into fights or quarrels. Not only this, but it is believed that if a market has been without a Raga Naba for a long time, the *tengkouga* there become so angry for being neglected that they kill
[123] the first chief appointed to it. This was the reality or belief behind a series of misadventures of which I was the victim.

123 I had spent an entire day in a market, and on returning home could
443 not find my pen. The next morning I sent an assistant to the chief
554 telling him about the loss and asking him to have an announcement
656 made in the market on the next market day that I would pay a handsome reward to whomever should find and deliver the pen. The chief sent back a reply saying that since there was no Raga Naba, he would have the Kos Naba acquaint the people with my loss. On the day of the market, I waited until midday, when most of the people had arrived, and then went to see whether the Kos Naba had any news of the pen. I checked with several of my friends to see whether they had heard about the pen and discovered, to my chagrin, that no an-
[364] nouncement had been made about it. I went and told the Kos Naba that the people were not hearing about the pen and suggested that one way to do so would be to have the Binderes (drummers and griots) circulate through the market announcing the loss. The Kos Naba refused to do this, and when I enlisted the aid of the chief's secretary, he, too, said that it could not be done because there was no Raga Naba. I had some notes on the institution of the Raga Naba, but as I did not know everything about it, I was, therefore, frankly puzzled

(12) Zahan (1954 : 371) states that "the place where all kinds of merchandise accumulate and where strangers come is a place charged with forces. In time, these forces build up to such a point within the precincts of the market that some purifications are necessary to liberate them. To omit making them would expose the participants to excitements leading to brawls and compromising the place of the transactions."

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their "evil" and "non-evil" ways. A little later the young men who possess bicycles may be seen suddenly hurrying to avoid the other *nansara*, this time, the French official, who comes into the market to apprehend those individuals who have not bought a bicycle license. All the *nansara* know that the market is the best place to find a Mossi.

Towards 3:00 P.M. the matrons in the market, having sold most of their own goods and bought those which they need, make the last rounds to see whether there are any bargains to be had. In their rounds the women may be badgered by sons, daughters and other relatives, but seldom by husbands, for extra francs to buy kolas or tobacco to bridge them over the two non-market days. Or the women themselves may seek out their male relatives to buy kola or goods, from the stranger who is making the rounds of the local markets. By this time of day the market place is emptying—at first this happens so imperceptibly that one does not notice it. However, by 4:00 P.M. a mass exodus begins as women collect their little children, hitch their babies on their backs, place baskets on their head and set out in the direction of their own villages or to the villages of relatives where they plan to spend time. By this hour also the Bendere are drunk, and for an extra calabash of beer are willing to recount genealogies for which, if sober, they would demand a sheep or goat.

Evening finds the market deserted except for scavenging dogs which hunt the scraps of food dropped by the now departed human beings. The market place finally falls silent, until late at night passing migrants retire there to sleep. These persons leave the market place at dawn to buy food from the women whose hawking cries herald another day of roadside commerce. The women use the profit from this trade to buy goods on the following market days.

[pp 279–738 not processed]